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THE  
Government  
OF THE  
TONGUE

*Richard Allcotter*

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*Stephen* By the Author of *Strutt*.

THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN, &c.

*now*

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*Death and Life are in the power of the  
Tongue; Prov. 18. 21.*

*Nath: Miltons*

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The fourth Impression.

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At the THEATER in OXFORD;

M. DC. LXXV.

# GOVERNMENT

OF THE

## LEGISLATURE

IN SENATE, FEBRUARY 10, 1847.

REPORT OF THE


COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE SENATE, JANUARY 15, 1847.

ALBANY: PUBLISHED BY J. B. LEECH, 1847.



<sup>E R B R</sup>  
T H E A 4 3 4 G A  
P R E F A C E.

 H E Government of the  
Tongue has ever bin justly  
reputed one of the most im-  
portant parts of human Re-  
giment. The Philosopher and the  
Divine equally attest this ; and So-  
lomon ( who was both ) gives his suf-  
frage also ; the persuasions to, & enco-  
miums of it taking up a conside-  
rable part of his book of Proverbs.  
I shall not therefore need to say any  
a 2 thing,

## The Preface.

thing, to justify my choice of this subject, which has so much better Authorities to commend it: I rather wish that it had not the super-addition of an accidental fitness grounded upon the universal neglect of it, it now seeming to be an art wholly out-dated. For tho' some lineaments of it may be met with in books, yet there is scarce any footsteps of it in practice, where alone it can be significant. The attempt therefore of reviving it I am sure is seasonable, I wish it were half as easy.

2. Indeed that skill was never very easy, it requiring the greatest vigilance and caution, and therefore not to be attain'd by loose trifling spirits. The Tongue is so slippery, that  
it

## The Preface.

*it easy deceaves a drowsy or heedless guard. Nature seems to have given it some unhappy advantage towards that. 'Tis in its frame the most ready for motion of any member, needs not so much as the flexure of a joint, and by access of humors acquires a glibness too, the more to facilitate its moving. And alas we too much find the effect of this its easy frame: it often goes without giving us warning; and as children when they happen upon a rolling engine, can set it in such a carriere, as wiser people cannot on a sudden stop; so the childish parts of us, our passions, our fancies, all our mere animal faculties, can thrust our tongues into such disorders, as our reason cannot easily rectify. The due managery therefore of this unruly member,*

## The Preface.

*member ; may rightly be esteemed one of the greatest mysteries of Wisdom and Vertue. This is intimated by St. James , If any man offend not in word , the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body , Ja.3. 2. 'Tis storied of Bembo a primitive Christian , that coming to a friend to teach him a Psalm , he began to him the thirty ninth , I said I will look to my waies , that I offend not with my Tongue ; upon hearing of which first verse , he stopt his Tutor , saying , This is enough for me , if I learn it as I ought ; and being after six months rebuk'd for not coming again , he replied , that he had not yet learnt his first lesson : nay after nineteen years he profess'd , that in that time he had scarce learnt to fulfil*



## The Preface.

*fil that one line. I give not this instance to discourage, but rather to quicken men to the study, for a lesson that requires so much time to learn, had need be early begun with.*

3. But especially in this age, wherein the contrary liberty has got such a prepossession, that men look on it as a part of their birth-right, nay do not only let their tongues loose, but studiously suggest inordinancies to them, and use the spur where they should the bridle. By this means conversation is so generally corrupted, that many have had cause to wish they had not bin made sociable creatures. A man secluded from company can have but the Devil and himself to tempt him, but he that converses,

has almost as many snares as he has

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## The Preface.

*companions. Men barter vices, and as if each had not enough of his own growth, transplant out of his neighbors soil, and that which was intended to cultivate and civilize the world, has turned it into a wild desert and wilderness.*

4. *This face of things I confess looks not very promising to one who is to solícite a reformation. But whatever the hopes are, I am sure the needs are great enough to justify the attempt. For as the disease is Epidemie, so it is mortal also, utterly inconsistent with that pure religion, which leads to life. We may take St. James's word for it, If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that mans religion is vain, Jam. i. 26. God knows*  
*we*



## The Preface.

*we have not much Religion among us : 'tis great pity we should frustrate the little we have , render that utterly insignificant , which at the best amounts to so little. Let therefore the difficulty and necessity of the task , prevail with us to take time before us , not to defer this so necessary a work till the night come ; or imagine that the Tongue wil be able to expiate its whole age of guilt by a feeble , Lord have mercy on me at the last. Tho indeed if that were supposable , 'twere but a broken reed to trust to , none knowing whether he shall have time or grace for that. He may be surpriz'd with an Oath , a Blasphemy , a Detraction in his mouth : many have bin so. 'Tis sure there must be a dying moment : and  
how*

## The Preface.

how can any man secure himself, it shall not be the same with that in which he utters those, and his expiring breath, be so employed? Sure they cannot think that those incantations (tho hellish enough) can make them shot free, render them invulnerable to death's darts; and if they have not that or some other as ridiculous reserves, 'tis 'strange what should make them run such a mad adventure.

5. But I expect it should be objected, that this little despicable Tract is not proportionable to the encounter to which it is brought, that besides the unskilful managing of those points it do's touch, it wholly omits many proper to the subject, there being faults of the Tongue which it  
passes

## The Preface.

*passes in silence. I confess there is color enough for this objection. But I believe if it were put to votes, more would resolve I had said too much, rather than too little. Should I have enlarged to the utmost compass of this Theme, I should have made the volume of so affrighting a bulk, that few would have attempted it; and by saying much I should have said nothing at all to those who most need it. Mens stomachs are generally so queasie in these cases, that 'tis not safe to overload them. Let them try how they can digest this; if they can so as to turn it into kindly nourishment, they will be able to supply themselves with the remainder. For I think I may with some confidence affirm, that he that can confine his*  
*Tongue*

## The Preface.

*Tongue within the limits here prescribed, may without much difficulty restrain its other excursions. All I shall beg of the Reader, is but to come with sincere intentions, and then perhaps these few Stones and Sling used in the name, and with invocation of the Lord of Hosts, may countervail the massive armor of the uncircumcised Philistin. And may that, God who loves to magnifie his power in weakness, give it the like success.*

THE

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OF THE  
Government of the Tongue.

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SECT. I.

*Of the Use of Speech.*

**I**AN at his first creation was substituted by God as his Vicegerent, to receive the homage, and enjoy the services of all inferior beings : nay farther was endowed with excellencies fit to maintain the port of so vast an Empire. Yet those very excellencies, as they qualified him for dominion ; so they unfitted him

A him

him for a satisfaction or acquiescence in those his vassals : the dignity of his nature set him above the society or converse of mere animals : so that in all the pomp of his royalty , amidst all the throng and variety of creatures , he still remain'd solitary. But God , who knew what an appetite of society he had implanted in him , judged this no agreeable state for him , *It is not meet that man should be alone.* Gen. 2. 18. And as in the universal frame of nature , he ingrafted such an abhorrence of vacuity , that all creatures do rather submit to a præternatural motion than admit it ; so , in this empty , this destitute condition of man , he relieved him by a miraculous expedient , divided him that he might unite him , and made one part of him an associate for the other.

2. NEITHER did God take this care to provide him a companion , merely for the entercourses of Sense : had that bin the sole aim , there needed no new productions , there were sensitive creatures enough : the design was to entertain his nobler principle , his reason , with a more equal converse , assign him an intimate , whose intellect as much corresponded with



with his, as did the outward form, whose heart, according to *Solomons* resemblance, answered his, *As in water face answers face.* Prov. 27. 19. with whom he might communicate minds, traffic and interchange all the notions and sentiments of a reasonable soul.

3. BUT tho there were this sympathy in their sublimer part which disposed them to the most intimate union; yet there was a cloud of flesh in the way which intercepted their mutual view, nay permitted no intelligence between them, other then by the mediation of some Organ equally commensurate to soul and body. And to this purpose the infinite wisdom of God ordained Speech; which as it is a sound resulting from the modulation of the Air, has most affinity to the spirit, but as it is uttered by the Tongue, has immediate cognation with the body, and so is the fittest instrument to manage a commerce between the rational yet invisible powers of human souls cloathed in flesh.

4. AND as we have reason to admire the excellency of this contrivance, so have we to applaud the extensiveness of the benefit. From this it is we derive all

the advantages of society : without this men of the nearest neighborhood would have signified no more to each other than our *Antipodes* now do to us. All our arts and sciences for the accommodation of this life, had remain'd only a rude Chaos in their first matter, had not speech by a mutual comparing of notions rang'd them into order. By this it is we can give one another notice of our wants, and solicit relief; by this we interchangeably communicate advises, reproofs, consolations, all the necessary aids of human imbecillity. This is that which possesses us of the most valuable blessing of human life, I mean Friendship, which could no more have bin contracted amongst dumb men, then it can between pictures and statues. Nay farther to this we owe in a great degree the interests even of our spiritual being, all the oral, yea and written revelations too of Gods will: for had there bin no language there had bin no writing. And tho we must not pronounce how far God might have evidenced himself to mankind by immediate inspiration of every individual, yet we may safely rest in the Apostles inference Rom. 10. 14. *How shall they believe in him*

him whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?

5. FROM all these excellent uses of it in respect of man, we may collect another in relation to God, that is, the *praising* and *magnifying* his goodness, as for all other Effects of his bounty, so particularly that he hath given us language, and all the consequent advantages of it. This is the just inference of the son of Syrach Ecclus. 51. 22. *The Lord hath given me a tongue, and I will praise him therewith.* This is the sacrifice which God calls for so often by the Prophets, *the Calves of our lips*, which answers to all the oblations out of the herd, and which the Apostle makes equivalent to those of the floor and winepress also, Heb. 13. 15. *The fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.* To this we frequently find the Psalmist exciting both himself and others, *Awake up my glory, I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the people; and I will sing unto thee among the nations.* Psal. 57. 9, 10. And *O praise the Lord with me, and let us magnify his name together.* Psal. 34. 3. And indeed who ever observes that excellent magazine of Devotion, the book of Psalms, shall find that the *Lands* make up a very great part of it.

6. By what hath bin said, we may define what are the grand uses of speech, viz. the Glorifying of God, and the benefiting of men. And this helps us to an infallible test by which to try our words. For since every thing is so far approvable as it answers the end of its being, what part soever of our discourses agrees not with the primitive ends of speech, will not hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary. It will therefore nearly concern us to enter upon this scrutiny, to bring our words to this touchstone: for tho in our depraved estimate the Eloquence of Language is more regarded then the innocence, tho we think our words vanish with the breath that utters them, yet they become records in Gods Court, are laid up in his Archives as witnesses either for, or against us: for he who is truth it self hath told us, that *By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemn'd*, Mat. 12. 37.

SECT.



## S E C T. II.

*Of the manifold Abuse of  
Speech.*

I. **A**ND now since the original designs of speaking are so noble, so advantageous, one would be apt to conclude no rational creature would be tempted to pervert them, since 'tis sure he can substitute none for them, that can equally conduce, either to his honor, or interest.

2. **Y**ET experience (that great baffle of speculation) assures us the thing is too possible, and brings in all ages matter of fact to confute our suppositions. So liable alas is speech to be depraved; that the Scripture describes it as the source of all our other depravation. Original sin came first out at the mouth by speaking, before it entred in by eating. The first use we find *Eve* to have made of her language, was to enter parly with the temter, and from that to become a temter to her husband. And immediatly upon the fall, guilty *Adam* frames his tongue to a frivolous excuse

cuse, which was much less able to cover his sin than the fig-leaves were his nakedness. And as in the infancy of the first world, the tongue had licked up the venom of the old serpent, so neither could the Deluge wash it off in the second. No sooner was that small colony (where-with the depopulated earth was to be replanted) come forth of the Ark; but we meet with *Cham* a delator to his own father, inviting his brethren to that execrable spectacle of their parents nakedness.

3. NOR did this only run in the blood of that accursed Person; the holy seed was not totally free from its infection, even the Patriarchs themselves were not exempt. *Abraham* used a repeted collusion in the case of his wife, and exposed his own integrity to preserve her chastity. *Isaac* the heir of his blessing, was son of his infirmity also, and acted over the same scene upon *Rebecca's* account. *Jacob* obtain'd his fathers blessing by a flat lie. *Simeon* and *Levi* spake not only falsely, but insidiously, nay hypocritically, abusing at once their proselytes, and their religion, for the effecting their cruel designs upon the *Sichemites*. *Moses* tho a man of an unparallel'd meekness, yet spake unadvisedly  
with

*with his lips*, Psal. 106. 33. *David* uttered a bloody vow against *Nabal*, spake words smoother than oil to *Uriah*, when he had don him one injury, and design'd him another. 'Twere endless to reckon up those several instances, the old Testament gives us of these lapses of the tongue: neither want there divers in the new; tho there is one of so much horror, as supercedes the naming more, I mean that of St. *Peter* in his reiterated abjuring his Lord, a crime which (abstracted from the intention) seems worse then that of *Judas*: that traitor owned his relation, cried *Master Master* even when he betraied him; so that had he bin mesured only by his tongue, he might have past for the better disciple.

4. THESE are sad instances, not recorded to patronize the sin, but to excite our caution. It was a Politic inference of the elder of Israel in the case of *Jehu*; *Behold two Kings stood not before him, bow then shall we stand?* 2. Kings 10. And we may well apply it to this; if persons of so circumspect a piety, have bin thus overtaken, what security can there be for our wretchless oscitancy? If those who kept their mouths as it were

*with a bridle*, Psal. 39. 1. could not alwaies preserve them innocent, to what guilts may not our unrestrained licentious tongues hurry us? Those which, as the Psalmist speaketh Psalm 73. 9. *go thro the world*, are in that unbounded range very likely to meet with him who walks the same round, Job. 2. 2, and by him be tuned and set to his key, be scrued and wrested from their proper use, and made subservient to his vilest designs.

5. AND would God this were only a probable supposition! but alas experience supplants the use of conjecture in the point: we do not only presume it may be so, but actually find it is so. For amidst the universal depravation of our faculties, there is none more notorious then that of speech. Whither shall we turn us to find it in its pristine integrity? Amidst that infinity of words in which we exhaust our breath, how few are there which do at all correspond with the original designation of speech; nay which do not flatly contradict it? To what unholy, uncharitable purposes is that useful faculty perverted? That which was meant to serve as the perfume of the tabernacle, to send up the incenses of praises and prayers,



now exhales in impious vapors, to eclipse if it were possible the Father of light. That which should be the store-house of relief and refreshment to our brethren, is become a magazine of all offensive weapons against them, *spears and arrows and sharp swords*, as the Psalmist often phrases it. We do not only fall by the slipperiness of our tongues, but we deliberately discipline and train them to mischief. *We bend our tongues as our bows for lies*, as the Prophet speaks, Jer. 9. 3. And in a word, what God affirmed of the old world in relation to thoughts, is too applicable to our words, *they are evil and that continually*, Gen. 6. 5. and that which was intended for the instrument, the aid of human society, is become the disturber, the pest of it.

6. I shall not attempt a particular discussion of all the vices of the tongue: it doth indeed pass all Geography to draw an exact Map of that *world of iniquity*, as St. James calls it. I shall only draw the greater lines, and distribute it into its principal and more eminent parts, which are distinguishable as they relate to God, our Neighbor, and our selves; in each of which I shall rather make an essay by

way of instance, then attempt an exact enumeration or survey.

### SECT. III.

#### *Of Atheisticall Discourse.*

i. **I** Begin with those which relate to God, this poor despicable member the tongue being of such a gigantic insolence tho not size, as even to make war with heaven. 'Tis true every disordered speech doth remotely so, as it is a violation of Gods law; but I now speak only of those which as it were attaque his person, and immediatly fly in the face of Omnipotency. In the highest rank of these we may well place all Atheistical Discourse, which is that bold sort of rebellion, which strikes not only at his Authority, but himself: Other blasphemies level some at one Attribute, some another; but this by a more compendious impiety, shoots at his very being, and as if it scorn'd those peice-male guilts; sets up a single monster big enough to devour them all: for all inferior

ferior profaneness is as much outdated by Atheism, as is religion it self.

2. TIME was when the inveihing against this, would have bin thought a very impertinent subject in a Christian nation, and men would have replied upon me as the *Spartan* Lady did, when she was ask'd what was the punishment for adulteresses, *There are no such things here.* Nay even amongst the most barbarous people, it could have concerned but some few single persons; no numbers, much less societies of men, having ever excluded the belief of a Deity. And perhaps it may at this day concern them as little as ever; for amidst the various Deities and worships of those remoter nations, we have yet no account of any that renounce all. 'Tis only our light hath so blinded us: so that God may upbraid us as he did Israel, *Hath a nation changed their gods which yet are no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.* Jer. 2. 11. This madness is now the inclosure, the peculiarity of those who by their names and institution should be Christians: as if that natural Aphorism, *That when things are at the height they must fall again,* had place here also, and

and our being of the most excellent, most elevated religion, were but the preparative to our being of none.

3. 'Tis indeed deplorable to see, how the professors of no God begin to vie numbers with all the differing persuasions in religion, so that Atheism seems to be the gulph that finally swallows up all our sects. It has struck on a sudden into such a reputation, that it scorns any longer to sculk, but owns it self more publicly than most men dare do the contrary. 'Tis set down in the seat of the scorner, and since it cannot argue, resolves to laugh all Piety out of countenance; and having seized the mint, nothing shall pass for wit that hath not its stamp, and with it there is no mettall of so base an alloy, but shall go current. Every the dullest creature that can but stoutly disclaim his maker, has by it sufficiently secured its title to ingenuity; and such measures being once established, no wonder at its shoals of profelytes, when it gives on the one hand licence to all sensual inordinances, permits them to be as much beasts as they will, or can; and yet tells them on the other, that they are the more men for it. Sure 'tis not strange that a hook thus doubly baited should

should catch many. Either of those allurements single, we see has force enough. The charms of sensuality are so fascinating, that even those who believe another world, and the severe revenges that will there attend their luxuries, yet chuse to take them in present with all the dismal reversions. And then sure it cannot but be very good news to such a one to be told, that that after-reckoning is but a false alarm, and his great willingness to have it true, will easily incline him to believe it is so. And doubtless were Atheism traced up to its first causes, this would be found the most operative; 'tis so convenient for a man that will have no God to controul or restrain him, to have none to punish him neither; that that utility passes into argument, and he will rather put a cheat upon his understanding by concluding there is no future account, then leave such a sting in his pleasures, as the remembrance of it must needs prove. This seems to be the original and first rise of this impiety, it being impossible for any man that sees the whole, nay but the smallest part of the Universe, to doubt of a first and supreme Being, until from the consciousness of his



his provocations, it become his interest there should be none.

4. THIS is indeed, considering the depravation of the world, a pretty fast tenure for Atheism to hold by; yet it has of late twisted its cord, and got that other string to its bow we before mentioned. Its bold monopolizing of wit and reason compells, as the other invited men. This we may indeed call the devils press, by which he hath filled up his troops; men are afraid of being reproched for silly and irrational, in giving themselves to a blind belief of what they do not see. And this bugbear frights them from their religion; resolving they will be *no fools for Christs sake*, 1. Cor. 4. 13. I dare appeal to the breasts of many in this age, whether this have not bin one of the most prevalent temptations with them to espouse the tenet; and tho perhaps they at first took it up, only in their own defence, for fear of being thought fools; yet that fear soon converts into ambition of being thought wits. They do not satisfy themselves with deserting their religion, unless they revile it also; remembering how themselves were laught out of it, they essay to do the like by others. Yea  
so

so zealous propugners are they of their negative Creed, that they are importunately diligent to instruct men in it, and in all the little sophistries and colors for defending it: so that he that would measure the opinions by their industry, and the remissness of believers, would certainly think that the great interest of Eternity lay wholly on their side. Yet I take not this for any argument of the confidence of this persuasion, but the contrary: for we know they are not the secure, but the desperate undertakings, where men are most desirous of partners, and there is somewhat of horror in an uncouth way, which makes men unwilling to travail it alone.

5. THE truth is, tho these men speak big, and prescribe as positively to their pupils, as if they had some counter revelation to confute those of *Moses* and *Christ*, yet were their secret thoughts laid open, there would scarce be found the like assurance there. I will not say to what reprobate sense some particular persons may have provoked God to deliver them, but in the generality, I believe one may affirm, that there is seldom an infidelity so sanguine as to exclude all fears. Their

most bold Thefts, That there is no God, no judgment, no hell, is often met with an inward tremulous Hypothesis, What if there be? I dare in this remit me to themselves, and challenge (not their consciences, who profess to have none, but) their natural ingenuity to say, whether they have not sometimes such damps and shiverings within them. If they shall say, that these are but the reliques of prepossession and education, which their reason soon dissipates, Let me then ask them farther, whether they would not give a considerable sum to be infallibly ascertained there were no such thing: now no sensible man would give a farthing to be secured from a thing which his reason tells him is impossible; therefore if they would give any thing (as I dare say they themselves cannot deny that they would) 'tis a tacite demonstration that they are not so sure as they pretend to be.

6. I might here join issue upon the whole, and press them with the unreasonable-ness, the desingenuousness of embracing a profession to which their own hearts have an inward reluctance; nay the imprudence of governing their lives  
by



by that position, which for ought they know may be (nay they actually fear is) false, and if it be, must inevitably immerse them in endless ruin. But I must remember my design limits me only to the faults of the Tongue; and therefore I must not follow this chase beyond those bounds. I shall only extend it to my proper subject; that of Atheistical talk, wherein they make as mad an adventure as in any other of their enormous practices, nay perhaps in some respects a worse.

7. IN the first place 'tis to be considered, that if there be a God, he, as well as men, may be provoked by our words as well as deeds. Secondly 'tis possible he may be more. Our ill deeds may be done upon a vehement impulse of temptation; some profit or pleasures may transport and hurry us; and they may at least have this alleviation, that we did them to please or advantage our selves, not to spight God. But Atheistical words cannot be so palliated: they are arrows directly shot against heaven, and can come out of no quiver but malice: for 'tis certain there never was man that said, There was no God, but he wished it first. We know

what an enhancement our injuries to each other receive from their being malicious : and sure they will do so much more to God, whose principal demand from us is, that we give him our heart. But thirdly this implieth a malice of the highest sort. Human spight is usually confined within some bounds, aims sometimes at the goods, sometimes at the fame, at most but at the life of our neighbor : but here is an accumulation of all those, back'd with the most prodigious insolence. 'Tis God only that has power of annihilation, and we (vile worms) seek here to steal that incommunicable right, and retort it upon himself, and by an anti-creative power would unmake him who has made us. Nay lastly, by this we have not only the utmost guilt of single rebels, but we become ring-leaders also, draw in others to that accursed association : for 'tis only this liberty of discourse that hath propagated Atheism. The Devil might perhaps by inward suggestions have drawn in here and there a single Profelyte; but he could never have had such numbers, had he not used some as decoies to ensnare others.

8. AND now let the brisk Atheist a little

little consider, what these aggravations will amount to. 'Twas good counsel was given to the Athenians, to be very sure *Philip* was dead, before they expressed their joy at his death, lest they might find him alive to revenge that hasty triumph. And the like I may give to these men, Let them be very sure there is no God, before they presume thus to defie him, lest they find him at last assert his being in their destruction. Certainly nothing less then a demonstration can justify the reasonableness of such a daring. And when they can produce that, they have so far outgon all the comprehensions of mankind, they may well challenge the liberty of their Tongue, and say, *They are their own, who is Lord over them*, Psalm. 12. 4.

9. BUT till this be don, 'twere well they would soberly ballance the hazards of their liberty with the gains of it. The hazards are of the most dreadful kind, the gains of the slightest: the most is but a vain applause of wit for an impious jest, or of reason for a deep considerer: and yet even for that they must incroach on the Devils right to, who is commonly the promter, and therefore if there be any credit in it may justly challenge

challenge it. Indeed 'tis to be fear'd he will at last prove the master wit, when as for those little loans he makes them, he gets their souls in mortgage. Would God they would consider betimes, what a woful raillery that will be, which for ought they know may end in *gnashing of teeth*.

10. THE next impiety of the Tongue is Swearing, that foolish sin which plaies the Platonic to damnation, and courts it purely for it self; without any of the appendant allurements which other sins have: a vice which for its guilt may justify the sharpest, and for its customariness the frequentest invectives which can be made against it. But it has bin assaulted so often by better pens, and has shewed it self so much proof against all Homily, that it is needless as discouraging a task for me to attempt it. 'Tis indeed a thing taken up so perfectly without all sense, that 'tis the less wonder to find it maintain its self upon the same principle 'tis founded, and continue in the same defiance to reason wherein it began.

11. ALL therefore that I shall say concerning it, is to express my wonder how it has made a shift to twist it self with the former sin of Atheism, by which according



according to all rules of reasoning it seems to be superseded: and yet we see none own God more in their oaths, than those that disavow him in their other discourse. Nay such men swear not only to swell their language, and make it sound more full and blustering, but even when they most desire to be believed. What an absurdity of wickedness is this? Is there a God to swear by, and is there none to believe in, none to pray to? We call it frenzy to see a man fight with a shadow: but sure 'tis more so, to invoke it. Why then do these men of reason make such solemn appeals (for such every oath is) to a mere Chimera and Phantasm? It would make one think they had some inward belief of a Deity, which they upon surprizal thus blurt out: if it argue not this, it does something worse, and becomes an evidence how much the appearance of a sin recommends it to them, that they thus catch at it, without examining how it will consist with another they like better. These are indeed wholesale Chapmen to Satan, that do not truck and barter one crime for another, but take the whole herd: and tho by reason of their disagreeing kinds they are apt to  
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gore and worry each other, yet he still keeps up his old policy, and will not let one Devil cast out another. A league shall be made between the most discordant sins, and there shall be a God, or there shall be none, according as opportunity serves to provoke him: so assuming to himself a power which even Omnipotence disclaims, the reconciling contradictions. And he succeeds in it as far as his concern reaches: for tho he cannot solve the repugnancies in reason, yet as long as he can unite the sins in mens practice, he has his design; nay has at once the gain and the sport of fooling these great pretenders to ratiocination.

12. A third sort of impious discourse there is, which yet is bottom'd on the most sacred, I mean those profane paraphrases that are usually made upon the holy Text, many making it the subject of their cavils, and others of their mirth. Some do it out of the former Atheistical principle, and I cannot but confess they act consonantly to themselves in it, for 'tis but a needful artifice for men to disparage those testimonies, which they fear may be brought against them. But there are others who not only profess a God, but also own  
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the sacred Scripture for his word, and yet use it as cursly as the others. And these I confess, are riddles of profaneness, that hang, as some have pictured *Solomon*, between heaven and hell, borrow the Christians faith, and the Atheists drollery upon it: and 'tis hard to say in which they are more in earnest. It is indeed scandalous to see, to what despicable uses those holy Oracles are put: such as should a Heathen observe, he would little suspect them to be own'd by us as the rule of our religion, and could never think they were ever meant for any thing beyond a whetstone for wit. One tries his Logic upon them, and objects to the sense; another his Rhetoric, and quarrels at the phrase; a third his contrivance, and think he could have woven the parts with a better contexture, never considering, that unless they could confute the Divinity of their original, all these accusations are nothing else but direct blasphemy, the making God *such a one as themselves*, Psal. 50. 21. and charging him with those defects which are indeed their own. They want learning or industry to sound the depth of those sacred treasures, and therefore they decry the

Scripture as mean and poor ; and to justify their own wisdom, dispute Gods. This is as if the mole should complain the sun is dark, because he dwells under ground, and sees not his splendor. Men are indeed in all instances apt to speak ill of all things they understand not, but in none more then this. Their ignorance of locall customs, Idioms of language, and severall other circumstances, renders them incompetent judges, (as has bin excellently evinced by a late Author.) 'Twill therefore besit them, either to qualify themselves better, or to spare their Criticisms. But upon the whole, I think I may challenge any ingenious man, to produce any writing of that antiquity, whose phraze and genius is so accommodated to all successions of ages. Styles and waies of address we know grow obsolete, and are almost antiquated as garments: and yet after so long a tract of time, the Scripture must (by considering men) be confest to speak not only properly, but often politely and elegantly to the present age: a great argument that it is the dictate of him that is, *The same yesterday, to day, and for ever,* Hebr. 13. 7.

13. BUT besides these more solemn traducers, there are a lighter ludicrous sort of profaners, who use the Scripture as they do odd ends of plaies, to furnish out their jests; clothe all their little impertinent conceits in its language, and debase it by the mixture of such miserable trifles, as themselves would be ashamed of, were they not hightned and inspirited by that profaneness. A bible phrase serves them in discourse as the haut-goust do's in diet, to give a relish to the most insipid stuff. And were it not for this Magazine, a great many mens raillery would want supplies: for there are divers who make a great noise of wit, that would be very mute if this one Topic were barr'd them. And indeed it seems a tacite confession, that they have little of their own, when they are fain thus to commit sacriledg to drive on the trade. But sure 'tis a pitiful pretence to ingenuity that can be thus kept up, there being little need of any other faculty but memory to be able to cap Texts. I am sure such repetitions out of other books would be thought pedantic and silly. How ridiculous would a man be, that should alwaies enterlard his

discourse with fragments of *Horace*, or *Virgil*, or the Aphorisms of *Pythagoras*, or *Seneca*? Now 'tis too evident, that it is not from any superlative esteem of sacred Writ, that it is so often quoted: and why should it then be thought a specimen of wit to do it there, when 'tis folly in other instances? The truth is, 'tis so much the reserve of those who can give no better Testimony of their parts, that methinks upon that very score it should be given over by those that can. And sure were it possible for any thing that is so bad to grow unfashionable, the world has had enough of this to be cloied with it: but how fond soever men are of this divertisement, 'twill finally prove that *mirth Solomon* speaks of, which *ends in heaviness*, Prov. 14. 13. for certainly whether we estimate it according to human or divine measures, it must be a high provocation of God.

14. LET any of us but put the case in our own persons: suppose we had written to a friend, to advertise him of things of the greatest importance to himself, had given him ample and exact instructions: back'd them with earnest exhortations and conjurings not to neglect his

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own concern, and lastly enforced all with the most moving expressions of kindness and tenderness to him: suppose, I say, that after all this, the next news we should hear of that letter, were to have it put in doggrel rime, to be made sport for the rabble, or at the best have the most eminent phrases of it pickt out and made a common by-word: I would fain know how any of us would resent such a mixture of ingratitude and contumely. I think I need make no minute application. The whole design of the Bible do's sufficiently answer, nay out-go the first part of the parallel, and God knows our vile usage of it do's too much (I fear too literally) adapt the latter. And if we think the affront to base for one of us, can we believe God will take it in good part? That were to make him not only more stupid then any man, but as much so as the heathen Idols, that have *eies and see not*: Psalm. 115. 5. And 'tis sure the highest madness in the world, for any man that believes that there is a God, to imagine he will finally sit down by such usage.

15. BUT if we weigh it in the scale of religion; the crime will yet appear more  
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heinous. Mere natural Piety has taught men to receive the Responses of their Gods with all possible veneration. What applications had the Delphic Oracle from all parts, and from all ranks of men? What confidence had they in its prediction, and what obedience did they pay to its advice? If we look next into the Mosaical Oeconomy, we shall see with what dreadful solemnities that Law was promulged, what an awful reverence was paid to the mount whence it issued, how it was fenced from any rude intrusions either of men or beasts: and after it was written in tables, all the whole equipage of the Tabernacle, was designed only for its more decent repository, the Ark it self receiving its value only from what it had in custody. Yea such a hallowing influence had it, as transfused a relative sanctity even to the meanest utensils, none of which were after to be put to common uses: the very perfume was so peculiar and sacred, that it was a capital crime to imitate the composition. Afterwards when more of the divine revelations were committed to writing, the Jews were such scrupulous reverers of it, that 'twas the business of

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of the Masorites, to number not only the sections and lines, but even the words and letters of the old Testament, that by that exact calculation they might the better secure it from any surreptitious practices.

19. AND sure the new Testament is not of less concern than the old: nay the Apostle asserts it to of far greater, and which we shall be more accountable for, *For if the word spoken by Angels were steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence, how shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken to us by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?* Heb. 2. 23. And it is in another place the inference of the same Apostle, from the excellence of the Gospel above the Law, that we should *serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*, Heb. 12. 28. And certainly 'tis but an ill essay of that reverence and godly fear, to use that very Gospel so irreverently and ungodlily as men now do. If we pass from the Apostolic to the next succeeding ages of the Church, we find the Primitive Christians lookt on their Bibles as their most  
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important treasure. Such was the outward respects they paid to them, (of which the standing up at the reading of the Gospel, still in use among us, is a faint memorial) that the heathen persecutors made it one part of their examination of the Christians brought to their tribunals, *What those books were which they adored while they read them?* Such was their intimate esteem, that they exposed all things else to the rapine of their enemies, so they might secure those volumes. Nor was this only an heroic piece of zeal in some, but indispensably required of all: insomuch that when in the heat of persecution, they were commanded to deliver up their Bibles to be burnt, the Church gave no indulgence for that necessity of the times, but exhorted men rather to deliver up their lives: and those whose courage failed them in the encounter; were not only branded by the infamous name of *Traditors*, but separated from the communion of the faithful, and not readmitted till after many years of the severest penance.

17. I have given this brief narration, with a desire that the reader will compare the practice of former times with those

those of the present, and see what he can find either among Heathens, Jews, or Christians, that can at all patronize our profaneness. There was no respect thought too much for the false Oracles of a falser God: and yet we think no contents too great for those of the true. The moral Law was so sacred to the Jews, that no parts of its remotest retinue, those ceremonial attendants, were to be lookt on as common: and we who are equally obliged by that Law, laugh at that by which we must one day be judged. The Ritual, the Preceptive, the Prophetic, and all other parts of sacred Writ, were most sedulously, most religiously guarded by them: and we look upon them as a winter nights tale, from which to fetch matter of sport and merriment. Lastly the first Christians paid a veneration to, nay sacrificed their lives to rescue their Bibles from the unworthy usage of the Heathens, and we our selves expose them to worse: they would but have burnt them, we scorn and vilify them, and outvy even the persecutors malice with our contempt. These are miserable Antithesis's; yet this God knows is the case with too many. I wonder what



new state of Felicity hereafter these men have fancied to themselves: for sure they cannot think these retrograde steps can ever bring them so much as to the Heathens Elyzium, much less the Christian Heaven.

18. IT will therefore concern those who do not quite renounce their claim to that Heaven, to consider soberly, how inconsistent their practice is with those hopes. A man may have a great estate conveyed to him; but if he will madly burn, or childishly make paper kites of his Deeds, he forfeits his title with his evidence: and those certainly that deal so with the conveyances of their eternal inheritance, will not speed better. If they will thus dally and play with them, God will be as little in earnest in the performance, as they are in the reception of the promises; nay he will take his turn of mocking too, and when their scene of mirth is over, his will begin. A dreadful menace of this we have, Prov. i. 24. *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof,*  
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*I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind: when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer, they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.* Would God I could as well transcribe this Text into mens hearts, and there would need no more to secure the whole Canon of Scripture from their profanation. Could men but look a little before them, and apprehend how in the daies of their distress and agony, they will gasp for those comforts which they now turn into ridicule; they would not thus madly defeat themselves, cut off their best and only reserve, and with a pitiful contempt, cast away those Cordials, which will then be the only support of their fainting spirits. As for those who deride Scripture upon Atheistical grounds, all I shall say is to refer to what I have said in the beginning of this Section; they had need be very well assured that foundation be not sandy: for if it be, this reproching Gods word will be a considerable addition to the guilt of all their other hostility, and

how jolly soever they seem at present, it may be when that question they are so willing to take for granted, is by death drawing near a decision, some of their confidence will retire, and leave them in an amazed expectation of somewhat, which they are sure cannot be good for them, who have so ill provided for it. Then perhaps their merry vein will fail them, and not their infidelity, but their despair may keep them from invoking that Power they have so long derided. 'Tis certain it has so happened with some: for as Practical, so Speculative wickedness, has usually another aspect, when it stands in the shadow of death, then in the dazzling beams of health and vigor. It would therefore be wisdom before hand to draw it out of this deceitful light, and by sober serious thoughts place it as near as may be in those circumstances in which 'twill then appear: and then sure to hearts that are not wholly petrified, 'twill seem safer to own a God early and upon choice, than late upon compulsion.

19. HOWEVER if they will not yield themselves Homagers, yet the mere possibility of their being in the wrong, should

should methinks perswade them at least to be civil adversaries. A generous man will not pursue even a falling enemy with revilings and reproch, much less will a wise man do it to one who is in any the least probability of revenging it: it being a received Maxim, That there is no greater folly then for a man to let his tongue betray him to mischief. Let it therefore in this case at least stand neuter, that if by their words they be not justified, yet by their words they may not be condemned. They can be no loosers by it: for at the utmost, 'tis but keeping in a little unsavory breath, which (supposing no God to be offended with it) is yet nauseous to all those men who believe there is one. To those indeed who have a zeal for their faith, there can be no Discourse so intolerable, so disobliging: it turns conversation into skirmishing, and perpetual disputes. The Egyptians were so zealous for their brutish Deities, that *Moses* presumed the Israelites sacrificing of those beasts they adored, must needs set them in an uproar, *Exod.* 8. 26. And sure those who do acknowledg a Divine power, cannot contentedly sit by to hear him blasphemed. 'Tis true there  
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are some so cool, that, they are of the same mind for God, that *Gideons* father was for *Baal*, Judg. 6. 31. *Let him plead for himself*, they will not appear in his defence: yet even these have a secret consciousness, that they ought to do so, and therefore have some uneasiness in being put to the Test: so that it cannot be a pleasant entertainment even for them. And therefore those who have no fear of God to restrain them, should merhinks, unless they be perfectly of the temper of the unjust Judg, Luke 17. 1. in respect of men abstain from all sorts of impious discourse; and at least be civil, tho they will not be pious.

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## SECT. IV.

## Of Detraction.

WE have seen in the last Section the insolence of the Tongue towards God; and sure we cannot expect it should pay more reverence to men. If there be those that dare *stretch their mouths against heaven*, Psalm. 7. 39. we are not to wonder if there be more that will *shoot their arrows, even bitter words*, against the best on earth, Psalm. 64. 3. I shall not attempt to ransack the whole quiver, by shewing every particular sort of verbal injuries which relate to our Neighbors, but rather chuse out some few which either for the extraordinariness of their guilt, or the frequency of their practice are the most eminent. I begin with *Detraction*, in which both those qualities concur: for as in some instances 'tis one of the highest sins, so in the general 'tis certainly one of the most common, and by being so becomes insen-

sensible. This vice (above all others) seems to have maintained not only its Empire, but its reputation too. Men are not yet convinced heartily that it is a sin: or if any, not of so deep a die, or so wide an extent as indeed it is. They have if not false, yet imperfect notions of it, and by not knowing how far its Circle reaches, do often like young Conjurers step beyond the limits of their safety.

THIS I am the apter to believe, because I see some degree of this fault cleave to those, who have eminently corrected all other exorbitancies of the Tongue. Many who would startle at an Oath, whose stomachs as well as consciences recoil at an obscenity, do yet slide glibly into a Detraction: which yet methinks persons otherwise of strict conversations should not do frequently and habitually, had not their easy thoughts of the guilt smoothed the way to it.

IT may therefore be no unkind attempt, to try to disentangle from this snare by displaying it; shewing the whole contexture of the sin, how 'tis woven with treds of different sizes, yet the least of them strong enough to nooze  
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and intrap us. And alas, if Satan fetter us, 'tis indifferent to him whether it be by a cable or a hair. Nay perhaps the smallest sins are his greatest stratagems. The finer his line is spun, the less shadow it casts, and is less apt to fright us from the hook : and tho there be much odds between a talent of lead and a grain of sand, yet those grains may be accumulated till they out-weigh the talent. It was a good reply of *Plato's*, to one who murmured at his reproving him for a small matter, *Custom* saies he, *is no small matter*. And indeed supposing any sin were so small as we are willing to fancy most, yet an indulgent habit even of that would be certainly ruinous : that indulgence being perfectly opposite to the Love of God, which better can consist with the indeliberate commissions of many sins, then with an allowed persistence in any one.

BUT in this matter of Detraction, I can not yield that any is small, save only comparatively with some other of the same kind which is greater : for absolutely considered there is even in the very lowest degrees of it, a flat contradiction to the grand rule of Charity,

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the loving our neighbor as our selves. And surely that which at once violates the sum of the whole second Table of the Law, for so our Saviour renders it, Luk. 10. 7. must be lookt on as no trifling inconsiderable guilt. To evidence this I shall in the Anatomizing this sin apply this Rule to every part of it: first consider it in Gross, in its entire body, and after descend to its several limbs.

I. DETRACTION in the native importance of the word, signifies the withdrawing or taking off from a thing? and as it is applied to the reputation, it denotes the impairing or lessening a man in point of fame, rendring him less valued and esteemed by others, which is the final aim of Detraction, tho pursued by various means.

2. THIS is justly look'd on as one of the most unkind designs one man can have upon another there being implanted in every mans nature a great tenderness of Reputation: and to be careless of it is lookt on as a mark of a degenerate mind. On which account *Solon* in his laws presumes that he that will sell his own fame will also sell the public

lic interest. 'Tis true, many have improved this too farr, blown up this native spark into such flames of Ambition, as has set the world in a combustion; Such as *Alexander, Cæsar*, and others, who sacrificed Hecatombs to their Fame, fed it up to a prodigy upon a Canibal diet, the flesh of Men: yet even these excesses serve to evince the universal consent of mankind, that Reputation is a valuable and desirable thing.

3. NOR have we only the suffrage of man, but the attestation of God himself, who frequently in Scripture gives testimony to it: *A good name is better then great riches*, Prov. 22. 1. And again, *A good name is better then precious ointment*. Eccles. 7. 1. And the more to recommend it, he proposes it as a reward to piety and vertue, as he menaces the contrary to wickedness. *The memory of the just shall be blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot*. Prov. 10. 7. And that we may not think this an invitation fitted only to the Jewish Oeconomy, the Apostle goes farther, and proposes the endeavor after it as a duty, *Whatsoever things are of good report, if there by any*



*vertue, and if there by any praise, think on these things, Phil. 4. 8.*

4. AND accordingly good men have in their estimate ranked their names the next degree to their Souls, prefer'd them before goods or life. Indeed 'tis that which gives us an inferior sort of Immortality, and makes us even in this world survive our selves. This part of us alone continues verdant in the grave, and yields a perfume, when we are stench and rottenness: the consideration whereof has so prevailed with the more generous Heathens, that they have cheerfully quitted life in contemplation of it. Thus *Epaminondas* alacriously expired, in confidence that he left behind him a perpetual memory of the victories he had atchieved for his Country. *Brutus* so courted the fame of a Patriot, that he brake thro all the obstacles of gratitude and humanity to attain it: he cheerfully bare the defeat of his attempt, in contemplation of the glory of it. 'Twere endless to recount the stories of the *Codri*, *Decii*, and *Curtii*, with the train of those noble Heroes, who in behalf of their Countries devoted themselves to certain death.

5. BUT we need no forreign Medi-  
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ums to discover the value of a good name: let every man weigh it but in his own scales, retire to his breast, and there reflect on that impatience he has when his own repute is invaded. To what dangers, to what guilts do's sometimes the mere fancy of a reproch hurry men? It makes them really forfeit that vertue from whence all true reputation springs, and like *Esops* dog loose the substance by too greedy catching at the shadow; an irrefragable proof how great a price they set upon their fame.

6. AND then since reason sets it at so high a rate, and passion at a higher, we may conclude the violating this interest, one of the greatest injuries in human commerce; such as is resented not only by the rash, but the sober: so that we must pick out only blocks and stones, the stupid and insensible part of mankind, if we think we can inflict this wound without an afflictive smart. And tho the power of Christianity do's in some so moderate this resentment, that none of these blows shall recoil, no degree of revenge be attempted; yet that do's not at all justify or excuse the inflicter. It may indeed be a useful trial  
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of the patience, and meekness of the defamed, yet the defamer has not the less either of crime or danger: not of crime, for that is rather enhanced then abated by the goodness of the person injur'd; not of danger, since God is the more immediate avenger of those who attempt not to be their own. But if the injury meet not with this meekness (as in this vindictive age 'tis manifold odds it will not) it then acquires another accumulative guilt, stand answerable not only for its own positive ill, but for all the accidental which it causes in the sufferer, who by this means is rob'd not only of his repute, but his innocence also, provoked to those unchristian returns, which draw God also into the enmity, and set him at once at war with heaven and earth. And tho as to his immediate judgment, he must bear his iniquity, answer for his impatience: yet as in all Civil insurrections the ring-leader is lookt on with a peculiar severity, so doubtless in this case, the first provoker has by his seniority and primogeniture a double portion of the guilt, and may consequently expect of the punishment, according to the Doom of our Savior,

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*Woe be to that man by whom the offence cometh*, Mat. 18. 7.

8. I N D E E D there is such a train of mischiefs usually follow this sin, that 'tis scarce possible to make a full estimate of its malignity. 'Tis one of the grand incendiaries which disturbs the peace of the world, and has a great share in most of its quarrels. For could we examine all the feuds which harrafs Persons, Families, nay sometimes Nations to, we should find the greater part take their rise from injurious reprochful words, and that for one which is commenced upon the intuition of any real considerable interest, there are many which owe their being to this licentiousness of the Tongue.

9. I N regard therefore of its proper guilt, and all those remoter sins and miseries which ensue it, 'tis every mans great concern to watch over himself. Neither is it less in respect both of that universal aptness we have to this sin, and its being so perpetually at hand; that for others we must attend occasions and convenient seasons, but the opportunities of this are alwaies ready: I can do my neighbor this injury, when I can do him no other. Besides the multitude of objects do proportionably

tionably multiply both the possibilities and incitations; and the objects here are as numerous, as there are Persons in the world I either know, or have heard of. For tho some sorts of Detractions seem confined to those to whom we bear particular malice, yet there are other kinds of it more ranging, which fly indifferently at all. Lastly this sin has the aid almost of universal example, which is an advantage beyond all the others, there being scarce any so irresistible insinuation as the practice of those with whom we converse, and no subject of converse so common as the defaming our neighbors.

IO. SINCE then the path is so slippery, it had not need be dark too. Let us then take in the best light we can, and attentively view this sin in its several branches, that by a distinct discovery of the divers acts and degrees of it, we may the better be armed against them all.



SECT V.

*Of Lying Defamation.*

I. **D**ETRACTION being ( as we have already said ) the lessning and impairing a man in his repute , we may resolve, that what ever conduces to that end, is properly a Detraction. I shall begin with that which is most eminent, the spreading of Defamatory reports. These may be of two kinds, either false, or true ; which tho they seem to be of very different complexions, yet may spring from the same stock, and drive at the same design. Let us first consider of the false.

2. **AND** this admits of various circumstances. Sometimes a man invents a perfect falsity of another: sometimes he that do's not invent it, yet reports it, tho he know it to be false: and a third sort there are, who having not certain knowledge whether it be false or no, do yet divulge it as an absolute certainty, or at least

least with such artificial insinuations, as may bias the hearer on that hand. The former of these is a crime of so high, so disingenuous a nature, that tho many are vile enough to commit it, none are so impudent as to avow it. Even in this age of insulting vice, when almost all other wickedness appears bare-fac'd, this is feign to keep on the vizard. No man will own himself a false accuser: for if modesty do not restrain him, yet his very malice will; since to confess would be to defeat his design. Indeed it is of all other sins the most Diabolical, it being a conjunction of two of Satans most essential properties, Malice and Lying. We know 'tis his peculiar title to be *the Accuser of the brethren*: and when we transcribe his copy, we also assume his nature, intitle our selves to a descent from him, *Ye are of your Father the Devil*, Joh. 8. 44. We are by it render'd a sort of *Incubus* brats, the infamous progenies of the Lying spirit. It is indeed a sin of so gross, so formidable a bulk, that there needs no help of Optics to render it discernible, and therefore I need not farther expatiate on it.

3. THE next degree is not much short

short of it; what it wants is rather of invention than malice: for he that will so adopt anothers lie, shews he would willingly have bin its proper Father. It do's indeed differ no more then the maker of adulterate wares, do's from the vender of them: and certainly there cannot be a more ignominious trade, then the being Hucksters to such vile Merchandize. Neither is the sin less then the baseness: we find the *Lover* of a lie ranked in an equal form of guilt with the *Maker*, Rev. 21. And surely he must be presumed to love it, that can descend to be the broker to it, help it to pass current in the world.

4. THE third sort of Detractors look a little more demurely, and with the woman in the Proverbs, Chap. 30. *wipe their mouths, and say they have don no wickedness.* They do not certainly know the falsity of what they report; and their ignorance must serve them as an Amulet against the guilt both of deceit and malice: but I fear it will do neither. For first perhaps they are affectedly ignorant: they are so willing it should be true, that they have not attempted to examine it. But Secondly it do's not

suffice that I do not know the falsity ; for to make me a true speaker , 'tis necessary I know the truth of what I affirm. Nay if the think were never so true , yet if I knew it not to be so , its truth will not secure me from being a liar : and therefore whoever endeavors to have that receiv'd for a certainty , which himself knows not to be so , offends against truth. The utmost that can consist with sincerity , is to represent it to others as doubtful as it appears to him. Yet even that how consonant soever to truth , is not to Charity. Even doubtful accusations leave a stain behind them , and often prove indelible injuries to the party accused : how much more then do the more positive and confident aspersions we have hitherto spoken of ? Let me add only this concerning this later sort , that they are greater advancers of Defamatory designs , then the very first contrivers. For those upon a consciousness of their falseness are obliged to proceed cautiously , to pick out the credulous and least discerning persons , on whom to impose their fictions , and dare not produce them in all companies for fear of detection : but these in confidence that the untruth ( if it  
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be one) lies not at their door; speak it without any restraint in all places, at all times; and what the others are fain to whisper, they proclame; like our new Engine, which pretends to convey a whisper many miles off. So that as in the case of Stealing 'tis proverbially said, that if there were no receivers there would be no thieves; so in this of Slander, if there were fewer spreaders, there would be fewer forgers of Libels: the manufacture would be discouraged, if it had not these retailers to put off the wares.

5. Now to apply these practices to our rule of duty, there will need no very close inspection to discern the obliquity. The most superficial glance will evidence these severall degrees of Slanderers to do what they would not be willing to suffer. Who among them can be content to be falsely aspersed? Nay so far are they from that, that let but the shadow of their own calumny reflect on themselves, let any but truly tell them that they have falsely accused others, they grow raving and impatient, like a dog at a looking glass, fiercely combating that image which himself creates: and how smoothly soever the original lie slides from



from them, the Echo of it grates their ears. And indeed 'tis observable, that those who make the greatest havock of other mens reputation, are the most nicely tender of their own; which sets this sin of calumny in a most Diametrical opposition to the Evangelical precept of *Loving our neighbors as our selves*.

6. THUS much is discernable even in the surface of the crime: but if we look deeper and examine the motives, we shall find the foundation well agrees to the superstructure, they being usually one of these two, *Malice* or *Interest*. And indeed the thing is so disingenuous, so contrary to the dictates of Humanity as well as Divinity, that I must in reverence to our common nature, presume it must be some very forcible impellent, that can drive a man so far from himself. The Devil here plaies the Artist: and as the fatallest poisons to man are (they say) drawn from human bodies, so here he extracts the venem of our Irascible and Concupiscible part, and in it dips those arrows, which we thus shoot at one another.

7. 'TIS needless to harangue severally upon each. The world too experimentally

tally knows the force of both. *Malice* is that whirlwind, which has shook States and Families, no less than private Persons; a passion so impetuous and precipitate, that it often equally involves the Agent and the Patient: a malicious man being of like violence with those who flung in the three Children, Dan. 3. consumed by those flames into which he cast others. As for *Interest*, 'tis that universal Monarch to which all other Empires are Tributaries, to which men sacrifice not only their Consciences and Innocence, but (what is usually much dearer) their Sensualities and Vices. Those whom all the Divine (either) threats or promises, cannot persuade to mortify, nay but restrain one Lust; at *Mammons* beck will disclame many, and force their inclinations to comply with their Interest.

8. AND whilst this sin of Calumny has two such potent Abettors, we are not to wonder at its growth: as long as men are malicious and designing, they will be traducing; those Cyclops's will be perpetually forging Thunderbolts, against which no innocence or vertue can be proof. And alas we daily find

too great effect of their industry. But tho these are the forgers of the more solemn deliberate calumnies, yet this sportive age hath produced another sort; there being men that defame others by way of divertisement, invent little stories that they may find themselves exercise, and the Town talk. This, if it must pass for sport, is such as *Solomon* describes, Prov. 26. 18, 19. *As a mad man that casteth firebrands, arrows and death; so is he that deceiveth his neighbor, and saith, am not I in sport?* He that shoots an arrow in jest, may kill a man in earnest; and he that gives himself liberty to play with his neighbors fame, may soon play it away. Most men have such an aptness to entertain sinister opinions of others, that they greedily draw in any suggestion of that kind; and one may as easily persuade the thirsty earth to refund the water she has suckt into her veins, as them to deposite a prejudice they have once taken up. Therefore such experiments upon fame, are as dangerous as that which *Alexander* is said to have made of the force of Naphtha upon his Page, from which he scarce escaped with life. These jocular slanders are often as  
 mischief-

mischievous as those of deeper design, and have from the slightness of the temptation an enhancement of guilt. For sure he that can put such an interest of his neighbors in balance with a little fit of laughter, sets it at lower price than he that hopes to enrich or advance himself by it: and tho it pass among some for a specimen of Wit, yet it really lifts them among *Solomons* fools, who *make a mock at sin*, Prov. 14. 9. In the mean time since slander is a plant that can grow in all soils, since the frolick humor as well as the morose betraies to the guilt, who can hope to escape this *Scourge of the Tongue*, as the Wiseman calls it, Ec. 26. 6. which communicates with all? Persons of all ranks do mutually asperse, and are aspersed: so that he who would not have his credulity abused, has scarce a securer way, then (like that Astrologer, who made his Almanack give a tolerable account of the weather by a direct inversion of the common prognosticators, ) to let his belief run quite counter to reports. Yea so Epidemic is this disease grown, that even religion (at least those parties and factions which assume that name) has got

a taint of it; each sect or opinion seeking to represent its Antagonist as odious as it can. And whilst they contend for speculative truth, they by mutual calumnies forfeit the practice: a thing that justly excites the grief of good men, to see that those who all pretend to the same Christianity, should only be unanimous in the violating that truth and Charity it prescribes.

10. AND if these be the weapons of our spiritual warfare, what may we think of the carnal? How are our secular animosities pursued, when our Speculations are thus managed? How easily do we run down the reputation of any who stand in the way either of our spleen or avarice? When *Joseph's* resolute purity had changed the scene of his Mistress's passion, she do's as readily shift that of guilt too, and fixes her crime upon him, Gen. 39. 14. So when *Ziba* had a mind to undermine *Mephibosheth* in his estate, he first practices upon his fame in a false accusation, 2 Sam. 16. 3. And alas how familiarly do we now see both these scenes repeated? Those who will not take vice into their bosoms, shall yet have it bespatter their faces: they who will not run



*to the same excess of riot*, must expect to be evil spoken of, 1 Pet. 4. 4. Nay not only pious men, but piety it self partakes of the same fate, falls under the two edg'd slander both of deceit and folly. And if men cannot be permitted quietly to enjoy their piety, much less will they those things whereof the world hath more gust, I mean secular advantages. There are still crimes to be discovered in the possessors of honors or Estates, and they wonderfully excite the zeal of those who would supplant them. What artifices are there to make them appear unworthy of what they have, that others more unworthy may succeed them? Nor are these storms only in the upper region, in the higher ranks of men; but if we pass thro all degrees, we shall find the difference is rather in the value of the things, then in the means of pursuing them. He that pretends to the meanest office do's as studiously disparage his competitor, as he that is rival'd for a kingdom. Nay even he that has but a merry humor to gratify, makes no scruple to do it with the loss of another mans reputation.

II. THUS do we accommodate every petty temporal interest at the cost of our eternal: and as an unskilful Fencer, whilst he is pursuing his thrust, exposes his body; so whilst we thus actuate our own malice, we abandon our selves to Satans, receive mortal wounds from him, only that we may give a few light scratches to one another. For as I have before said, there is nothing do's more secure his title to us, then this vice of Calumny, it bearing his proper impress and figure. And we may fear *Christ* will one day make the same Judgment of persons as he did of coin, and award them to him whose *Image and superscription they bear*, Mat. 22. 20.

12. AND now how great a madness is it to make costly oblations to so vile an Idol? This is indeed the worshiping our own Imaginations, preferring a malicious fiction before a reall felicity: and is but faintly resembled by him, who is said to have chosen to part with his Bishopric, rather then burn his Romance. Alas are there not gross corporal sins enough to ruine us, but must we have aëreal ones too, damn our selves with Chimera's, and by these forgeries of our brains

brains dream our selves to destruction?

13. LET all those then who thus unhappily employ their inventive faculty, timely consider, how unthriving a trade 'tis finally like to prove; that all their false accusations of others will rebound in true ones upon themselves. It do's often so in this world, where many times the most clandestine contrivances of this kind meet with detection. Or if they should happen to keep on the disguise here, yet 'twill infallibly be torn off at the great day of manifestation, when before God, Angels, and Men, they will be render'd infinitely more vile, then 'twas possible for them here to make others.

SECT.

## S E C T. V I.

*Of Uncharitable Truth.*

1. **I**N the next place we are to consider of the other branch of Defamatory reports, viz. such as are true: which tho they must be confest to be of a lower form of guilt then the former, yet as to the kind, they equally agree in the definition of Detraction, since 'tis possible to impair a mans credit by true reports as well as by false.

2. To clear this I shall first observe, that altho every fault hath some penal effects which are coetaneous to the act, yet this of Infamy is not so: this is a more remote consequent; that which is immediately depends upon, is the publishing. A man may do things which to God and his own conscience render him abominable, and yet keep his reputation with men: but when this stifled crime breaks out, when his secret guilts are detected, then, and not till then, he becomes infamous: so that altho his sin be  
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the Material, yet it is the discovery that is the Formal cause of his Infamy.

3. THIS being granted, it follows that he that divulges an unknown concealed fault, stands accountable for all the consequences that flow from that divulging; but whether accountable as for guilt, must be determin'd by the particular circumstances of the cause. So that here we must admit of an exception: for tho every discovery of anothers fault be in the strict natural sense of the word a Detraction, yet it will not alwaies be the sin of Detraction, because in some instances there may some higher obligation intervene, and supersede that we ow to the fame of our neighbor; and in those cases it may not only be lawful, but necessary to expose him.

4 Now all such cases I conceive may summarily be reduced to two heads, Justice and Charity. First as to Justice: that we know is a fundamental vertue, and he that shall violate that, to abound in another, is as absurd, as he that undermines the foundation to raise the walls. We are not to steal to give alms, and God himself has declared that he hates robbery for a burnt-offering: so that no  
pretence



pretence either of Charity or Piety can absolve us from the duty we ow to Justice. Now it may often fall out, that by concealing one mans fault, I may be injurious to another, nay to a whole community: and then I assume the guilt I concele, and by the Laws both of God and Man am judged an accessory.

5. AND as justice to others enforces, so sometimes Justice to a mans self allows the publishing of a fault, when a considerable interest either of fame or fortune cannot otherwise be rescued. But to make loud outcries of injury, when they tend nothing to the repress of it, is a liberty rather assumed by rage and impatience, then authorized by Justice. Nay often in that case the complainer is the most injurious Person; for he inflicts more then he suffers, and in lieu of some trivial right of his which is invaded, he assaults the other in a nearer interest, by wounding him in his good name: but if the cause be considerable and the manner regular, there lies sure no obligation upon any man to wrong himself, to indulge to another.

6. NEITHER do's Charity retrench  
this

this liberty: for tho it be one act of Charity to concele another mans faults, yet sometimes it may be inconsistent with some more important Charity, which I own to a third Person; or perhaps to a Multitude; as in those cases wherein public benefit is concern'd. If this were not allowable, no History could lawfully be written; since if true, it cannot but recount the faults of many: no evidence could be brought in against a Malefactor; and indeed all discipline would be subverted; which would be for great a mischief, that Charity obliges to prevent it, what Defamation soever fall upon the guilty by it. For in such instances 'tis a true rule, that mercy to the evil proves cruelty to the innocent. And as in a competition of mischiefs we are to chuse the least; so of two goods the greatest; and the more extensive, is the most eligible.

7. NAY even that Charity which reflects upon my self, may also sometimes supersede that to my neighbor; the rule obliging me to love him as, not better then my self. I need not sure silently assent to my own unjust Defamation for fear of proving another a false accuser,

nor suffer my self to be made a begger, to concele another mans being a thief. 'Tis true in a great inequality of interests, Charity (whose Character it is, *Not to seek her own* 1 Cor. 13. 5.) will prompt me to prefer a greater concern of my neighbors before a slight one of my own: but in equal circumstances I am sure at liberty to be kind first to my self: If I will recede even from that, I may; but that is then to be accounted among the Heroic flights of Charity, not her binding and indispenfible Laws.

8. HAVING now set the boundaries to the excepted cases; as all instances within them will be legitimated, so all without them will (by the known rule of exceptions) be precluded, and fall under that general duty we owe to our neighbor, of tendering his credit; an obligation so Universally infringed; that 'tis not imaginable the breach should alwaies happen within the excepted cases. When 'tis remembred how unactive the principles of Justice and Charity are now grown in the world, we must certainly impute such incessant effects, to some more vigorous causes: of which it  
may

may not be amiss to point out some of the most obvious, and leave every man to examine which of them he finds most operative in himself.

9. IN the first place I may reckon *Pride*, a humor which as it is alwaies mounting, so it will make use of any foot-stool towards it rise. A man who affects an extraordinary splendor of reputation, is glad to find any foils to set him of; and therefore will let no fault nor folly of anothers enjoy the shade, but brings it into the open light, that by that comparison his own excellences may appear the brighter. I dare appeal to the breast of any proud man, whether he do not upon such occasions, delight to make some Pharisaical reflections on himself, whether he be not apt to say, *I am not like other men, or as this Publican*, Luke 18. tho probably he leave out the *God I thank thee*. Now he that cherishes such resentments as these in himself, will doubtless be willing to propagate them to other men; and to that end render the blemishes of others as visible as he can. But this betraies a degenerate spirit, which from a consciousness that he wants solid worth, on which to



bottom a reputation, is fain to found it on the ruines of other mens. The true Diamond sparkles even in the sunshine: 'tis but a glow-worm vertue, that owes its luster to the darkness about it.

10. ANOTHER promter to Detraction is *Envy*, which sometimes is particular, sometimes general. He that has a pique to another, would have him as hateful to all mankind as he is to him; and therefore as he grieves and repines at any thing that may advance his estimation, so he exults and triumphs when any thing occurs which may depress it, and is usually very industrious to improve the opportunity, nay has a strange sagacity in hunting it out. No vulture do's more quickly scent a carcass, then an envious Person do's those *dead flies* which corrupt his neighbors ointment, Eccles. 10. 1. the vapor whereof his hate, like a strong wind, scatters and disperfes far and near. Nor needs he any great crime to practice on: every little infirmity or passion, lookt on thro his Optics, appears a mountainous guilt. He can improve the least speck or freckle into a leprosy, which shall overspread the whole man: and a cloud no *bigger*



ger then a mans hand like that of *Elisha*,  
 1 Kings 18. 44. may in an instant, with  
 the help of prejudice, grow to the utter  
 darkning of the brightest reputation, and  
 fill the whole horizon with tempest and  
 horror. Sometimes this Envy is gene-  
 ral, not confin'd to any man person,  
 but diffused to the whole nature. Some  
 tempers there are so malign, that they  
 wish ill to all, and believe ill of all; like  
*Timon* the Athenian, who profess him-  
 self an universal man-hater. He whose  
 guilty conscience reflects dismal images  
 of himself; is willing to put the same  
 ugly shape upon the whole nature, and  
 to conclude that all men are the same,  
 were they but closely inspected. And  
 therefore when he can see but the least  
 glimmering of a fault in any, he takes it  
 as a proof of his Hypothesis, and with  
 an envious joy calls in as many specta-  
 tors as he can. 'Tis certain there are  
 some in whose ears nothing sounds so  
 harsh as the commendation of another,  
 as on the contrary nothing is so melodi-  
 ous as a Defamation. *Plutarch* gives an  
 apt instance of this upon *Aristides's* ba-  
 nishment, whom when a mean Person  
 had propos'd to Ostracism, being askt  
 what

what displeasure *Aristides* had don him, he replied, *None, neither do I know him, but it grieves me to hear every body call him a just man.* I fear some of our keenest accusers now a daies may give the same answer. No man that is eminent for Piety (or indeed but moral vertue) but he shall have many insidious eies upon him *watching for his halting*: and if any the least obliquity can be espied, he is used worse then the vilest malefactor: for such are tried but at one bar, and know the utmost of their doom; but these are arraigned at every Table, in every Tavern. And at such variety of Judicatures, there will be as great variety of sentences; only they commonly concur in this one, that he is an Hypocrite, and then what complacency, what triumph have they in such a discovery? There is not half so much Epicurism in any of their most studied luxuries, no spectacle affords them so much plesure, as a bleeding fame thus lying at their mercy.

II. ANOTHER sort of Detractors there are, whose designs are not so black, but are equally mean and fordid, much too light to be put in balance with a neighbors  
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Credit. Of those some will pick up all the little stories they can get, to humor a Patron: an artifice well known by those trencher guests, who, like Rats, still haunt the best Provisions. These men do almost come up to a literal sense of what the *Psalmist* spoke in a figurative, Psalm. 14. *and eat up people for bread*, tear and worry men in their good names, that themselves may eat. It was a Curse denounced against *Elis*'s off-spring, *that they should come and crouch for a morsel of bread* 1 Sam. 2. 39. But such men court this as a preferment, and to bring themselves within the reach of it stick not to assume that vilest office of common Delators. There are others who when they have got the knowledg of another mans fault, think it an endearing think to whisper it in the ear of some friend or confidant. But sure if they must needs sacrifice some secret to their friendship, they should take *Dauids* rule, and *not offer that which cost them nothing*. If they will express their confidence, let them acquaint them with their own private crimes. That indeed would show something of trust: but these experiments  
upon

upon another mans cost, will hardly convince any considering Person of their kindness.

12. THERE still remains a yet more trifling sort of Defamers, who have no deliberate design which they pursue in it, yet are as assiduous at the Trade as the deeper contrivers. Such are those who publish their neighbors failings as they read Gazets, only that they may be telling News: an Itch wherewith some peoples tongues are strangely over-run, who can as well hold a glowing Coal in their mouths, as keep any thing they think New; nay will sometimes run themselves out of breath, for fear least any should serve them as *Abimaaz* did *Cushi* 2. Sam. 18. 23. and tell the tale before them. This is one of the most Childish vanities imaginable: and sure men must have Souls of a very low level, that can think it a commensurate entertainment. Others there are who use Defamatory discourse, neither for the love of News, nor Defamation, but purely for love of talk: whose speech like a flowing current bears away indiscriminately whatever lies in its way. And indeed such incessant talkers, are usually  
 peo-

people, nor of depth enough to supply themselves out of their own store, and therefore can let no forreign accession pass by them; no more then the Mill which is alwaies going, can afford any waters to run wast. I know we use to call this Talkativeness a Feminine vice; but to speak impartially, I think, tho we have given them the inclosure of the Scandal, they have not of the fault, and he that shall appropriate Loquacity to Women, may perhaps sometimes need to light *Diogenes's* Candle to seek a man: for 'tis possible to go into Masculine company, where 'twill be as hard to edg in a word, as at a Female Gossiping. However as to this particular of Defaming, both the Sexes seem to be at a vie: and I think he were a very Critical Judg, that could determine between them.

13. Now left this later sort of Defamers should be apt to absolve themselves, as men of harmless intentions, I shall desire them to consider, that they are only more impertinent, not less injurious. For tho it be granted, that the proud and envious are to make a distinct account for their pride



and envy ; yet as far as relates to the neighbor , they are equally mischievous. *Anacreon* that was choaked with a grape-stone , died as surely as *Julius Cesar* with his three and twenty wounds ; and a mans reputation may be as well fool'd and prattled away , as maliciously betrayed. Nay perhaps more easily ; for where the speaker can least be suspected of design , the hearer is apter to give him Credit : this way of insinuating by familiar discourse , being like those poisons that are taken in at the pores , which are the most insensibly sucked in , and the most impossible to expel.

14. BUT we need not *dispute* which is worst , since 'tis certain all are bad , none of them ( or any that hold proportion with them ) being at all able to pretend their warrant either from Justice or Charity. And then what our Savior saies in another case , will be applicable to this , *He that is not for us is against us* , Mat. 12. 30. He that in publishing his neighbors faults , acts not upon the dictates of Justice or Charity , acts directly in contradiction to them : for where they do not upon some particular respects command , they do implicitly

plicitly and generally forbid all such discoveries.

15. F O R first if a fault divulged be of a light nature, the offender cannot thereby merit so much, as to be made a public discourse. Fame is a tender thing, and seldom is tost and bandied without receiving some bruise, if not a crack: for reports we know like snow-balls gather still the farther they roul: and when I have once handed it to another, how know I how he may improve it? And if he deliver it so advanced to a third, he may give his contribution also to it, and so in a successive transmitting, it may grow to such a monstrous bulk, as bears no proportion to its Original. He must be a great stranger to the world, that has not experimentally found the truth of this. How many persons have lain under great and heavy scandals, which have taken their first rise only from some inadvertence or indiscretion? Of so quick a growth is Slander, that the least grain, like that of mustard seed, mentioned Mat. 13. 32. immediatly shoots up into a tree. And when it is so, it can no more be reduced back into its first cause;

then a tree can shrink into that little seed from whence it first sprang. No ruins are so irreparable as those of reputation: and therefore he that pulls out but one stone towards the breach, may do a greater mischief than perhaps he intends; and a greater injustice too: for by how much the more strictly Justice obliges to reparation in case of injuries don, so much the more severely do's it prohibit the doing those injuries which are incapable of being repaired. In the Levitical Law he that knew his ox was apt to gore, and yet kept him not up, stood responsible for any mischief he happened to do, Exod. 21. 29. I think there is no considering man can be ignorant how apt little trivial accusations are to tear and mangle ones fame: and yet if the lavish talker restrain them not, he certainly stands accountable to God, his Neighbor, and his own Conscience, for all the danger they procure.

16. B U T if the report concern some higher and enormous crime, 'tis true the delinquent may deserve the less pity, yet perhaps the reporter may not deserve the less blame: for often such a dif-

discovery serves, not to reclame but to enrage the offender, and precipitate him into farther degrees of ill. Modesty and fear of shame, is one of those natural restraints which the wisdom of God has put upon mankind, and he that once stumbles, may yet by a check of that bridle recover again: but when by a public detection he is fallen under that infamy he fear'd, he will then be apt to discard all caution, and to think he ow's himself the utmost plesures of his vice, as the price of his reputation. Nay perhaps he advances farther, and sets up for a reverse sort of Fame, by being eminently wicked: and he who before was but a Clandestine disciple, becomes a Doctor of impiety. And sure it were better to let a concealed crime remain in its wisht obscuriy, then by thus rouzing it from its covert, bring it to stand at bay, and set it self in this open defiance; especially in this degenerous age, when vice has so many well willers, that, like a hoping party, they eagerly run into any that will head them.

17. AND this brings in a third consideration relating to the public, to which the divulging of private (especially if they



they be novel unusual ) crimes , do's but an ill piece of service. Vice is contagious , and casts pestilential vapors and as he that should bring out a plague-sick Person , to inform the world of his disease , would be thought not to have much befriended his neighborhood ; so he that displaies these vicious Ulcers , whilst he seeks to defame one , may perhaps infect many. We too experimentally find the force of ill examples. Men often take up sins , to which they have no natural propension , merely by way of conformity and imitation. But if the instance happen in a crime , which more suits the practice of the hearers , tho it cannot be said to seduce , yet it may encourage and confirm them , embolden them not only the more frequently to act , but even to avow those sins wherein they find they stand not single , and by discovering a new accessory to their Party , to invite them the more heartily and openly to espouse it.

18. THESE are such effects as surely do not very well correspond with that Justice and Charity we ow either to particular Persons , or to mankind in General. And indeed no better can be expected ,  
from



from a practice which so perfectly contradicts the grand rule both of Justice and Charity, the doing as we would be don to. That this do's so, every man has a ready conviction within him, if he please but to consult his own heart. Alas with what solicitude do we seek to hide our own guilts with false dresses, what varnishes have we for them? There are not more arts of disguising our Corporal blemishes, then our Moral: and yet whilst we thus paint and parget our own deformities, we cannot allow any the least imperfection of anothers to remain undetected, but tear off the veil from their blushing frailties, and not only expose but proclame them. And can there be a grosser, a more detestable partiality then this? God may sure in this instance (as in many others) expostulate with us as he did with Israel, Ezek. 33. *Are not your waies unequal?* What Barbarism, what inhumanity is it thus to treat those of the same common nature with our selves, whom we cannot but know have the same concern to preserve a Reputation, and the same regret to lose it, which we have? And what shame is it, that that Evangelical precept

precept, of doing as we would be don to, which met with so much reverence even from Heathens, that *Severus* the Emperor preferr'd it to all the Maxims of Philosophers; should be thus contemned and violated by Christians, and that too upon such slight inconsiderable motives as usually prevail in this case of Defamation?

19. B U T we are not to consider this fault only in its root as it is a defect of Justice and Charity, but in its product to, as it is a Seminary of more injustice and Uncharitableness. Those disadvantageous reports we make of our neighbors, are almost seen to come round: for let no man perswade himself, that the hearers will keep his counsel any better then he do's that of the defamed Person. The softest whisper of this kind, will find others to Echo it, till it reach the ears of the concerned Party, and perhaps with some enhancing circumstances too. And when 'tis consider'd how unwilling men are to hear of their faults, tho even in the mildest and most charitable way of admonition, 'tis not to be doubted a public Defamation, will seem disobliging enough to provoke a return; which

which again begets a rejoinder, and so the quarrel is carried on with mutual recriminations; all malicious inquiries are made into each others manners, and those things which perhaps they did in closets, come to be proclaimed upon the house top: so the wild-fire runs round, till sometimes nothing but blood will quench it; or if it arrive not to that, yet it usually fixes in irreconcilable feud. To this is often owing those distances we see among friends and relations; this breeds such strangeness, such animosities amongst neighbors, that you cannot go to one, but you shall be entertain'd with invectives against the other; nay perhaps you shall lose both, because you are willing to side with neither.

20. THESE are the usual consequences of the liberty of the Tongue: and what account can any man give to himself, either in Christianity or prudence, that has let in such a train of mischiefs, merely to gratify an impotent childish humor of telling a tale? Peace was the great Legacy Christ left to his followers, and ought to be guarded, tho we expose for it our greatest temporal concerns,

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but

but cannot without despiht to him, as well as our brethren, be thus prostituted.

21. YET if we consider it abstractedly from those more solemn mischiefs which attend it, the mere levity and unworthiness of it sets it below an ingenious Person. We generally think a tatler and busy-body a title of no small reproch: yet truly I know not to whom it more justly belongs, then to those, who busy themselves first in learning, and then in publishing the faults of others: an employment which the Apostle thought a blot, even upon the weaker sex, and thinks the prevention of such importance, that he prescribes them to change their whole condition of life; to convert widow-hood (tho a state which in other respects he much prefers, 1 Cor. 7. 8.) into marriage, rather then expose themselves to the temptation, 1 Tim. 5. 13, 14. And if their impotence cannot afford excuse for it, what a debasement is it of mens nobler faculties to be thus entertain'd? The Historian gives it as an ill indication of *Domitians* temper, that he employ'd himself in catching and tormenting Flies: and sure they  
fall

fall not under a much better character, either for wisdom, or good nature, who thus snatch up all the little fluttering reports, they can meet with to the prejudice of their neighbors.

22. BUT besides the divulging the faults of others, there is another branch of Detraction naturally springing from this root, and this is censuring and severe judging of them. We think not we have well plai'd the Historians, when we have told the thing, unless we add also our remarks; and animadversions on it. And altho'tis, God knows, bad enough to make a naked relation, and trust it to the severity of the hearers; yet few can content themselves with that, but must give them a sample of rigor, and by the bitterness of their own censure invite them to pass the like: a process contrary to all rules of Law or equity, for the Plaintiff to assume the part of a Judg. And we may easily divine the fate of that mans fame, that is so unduly tried.

23. 'Tis indeed sad to see how many private tribunals are every where set up, where we scan and Judg our neighbor's action, but scarce ever acquit any.



We take up with the most incompetent witnesses, nay often suborn our own surmises and jealousies, that we may be sure to cast the unhappy Criminal. How nicely and scrupulously do we examine every circumstance; (Would God we were but half as exact in our own penitential inquiries) and torture it to make it confess something which appears not in the more general view of the fact, and which perhaps never was in the actors intention? In a word we do like witches with their Magical Chymistry, extract all the venom, and take none of the allay. By this means we confound the degrees of sins, and sentence deliberate and indeliberate, an habit or an act all at one rate, that is commonly, at the utmost it can amount to, even in its worse acceptation: and sure this were a most culpable corruption in judgment, could we shew our commission to judg our brethren.

24. BUT here we may every one of us interrogate our selves in our Savior's words, *Who made me a Judg?* Luke 12.

14. And if he disclam'd it, who in respect of his Divinity had the Supreme right, and that too in a case wherein

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one (at least) of the Litigants had desired his interposition, what a boldness is it in us to assume it, where to such appeal is made to us, but on the contrary the party disowns our Authority? Nay (which is infinitely more) 'tis superseded by our great Law-giver, in that express prohibition, *Mat. 7. 1. Judge not*, and that back'd with a severe penalty, *that ye be not judged?* As God hath appropriated vengeance to himself, so has he Judicature also; and 'tis an invasion of his peculiar, for any (but his Delegates the lawful Magistrates) to pretend to either. And indeed in all private Judgment, so much depends upon the intention of the Offender, that unless we could possess our selves of Gods Omniscience, 'twill be as irrational as impious to assume his Authority. Until we know mens hearts, we are at the best but imperfect Judges of their actions. At our rate of judging St. Paul had surely pass'd for a most malicious Persecutor, whereas God saw he *did ignorantly in unbelief*, and upon that intuition had *mercy on him*, *1. Tim. 1. 13.* 'Tis therefore good counsel which the Apostle gives, *1. Cor. 4. 5. Judge nothing*

*nothing before the time until the Lord come.* For tho 'tis said *the Saints shall judg the World*, 1. Cor. 6. 3, yet it must be at the great assize, and he that will needs intrude himself into the office before the time, will be in danger to be rather Passive then Active in the Judicatory. I do not here advise to such a stupid charity as shall make no distinction of Actions. I know there is a wo pronounced as well to those who *call evil good, as good evil*. Surely, when we see an open notorious sin committed, we may express a detestation of the Crime, tho not of the Actor; nay it may sometimes be a necessary Charity, both to the Offender, and to the innocent Spectators, as an Amulet to keep them from the Contagion of the Example. But still even in these cases, our Sentence must not exceed the evidence, we must judg only according to the visible undoubted circumstances, and not aggravate the crime upon presumptions and conjectures; if we do, how right soever our guesses may be, our judgment is not, but we are as St. James speaks, *Judges of evil thoughts*, Chap. 2. 4.

25. I N D E E D this rash judging  
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is not only very unjust both to God and man, but it is an act of the greatest pride. When we set our selves in the tribunal, we alwaies look down with contempt on those at the bar. And certainly there is nothing do's so gratify, so regale a haughty humor, as this piece of usurpt Sovereignty over our brethren: but the more it do's so, the greater necessity there is to abstain from it. Pride is a hardy kind of vice, that will live upon the barest pasture: you cannot starve it with the most industrious mortifications: how little need is there then of pampering and heightning it, which we cannot more effectually do, then by this censorious humor? for by that we are so perpetually employ'd abroad, that we have no leisure to look homeward, and see our own defects. We are like the inhabitants of *Ai*, Jos. 8. so eager upon the pursuit of others, that we leave our selves expos'd to the ambushes of Satan, who will be sure still to encourage us in our chase, draw us still farther and farther from our selves, and cares not how zealous we are in fighting against the crimes of others, so he can but keep that zeal from recoiling upon our own.

• 26. LASTLY this judging others is one of the highest violations of Charity. The Apostle gives it as one of the properties of that grace, that *it thinks no evil* (i. e.) is not apt to make severe constructions, but sets every thing in the fairest light, puts the most candid interpretations that the matter will bear. And truly this is of great importance to the reputation of our neighbors. The world we know is in many instances extremely governed by opinion, but in this 'tis all in all; it has not only an influence upon it, but is that very thing: reputation being nothing but a fair opinion and estimation among others. Now this opinion is not alwaies swaied by due motives: sometimes little accidents, and often fancy, and ofttest prepossession governs in it. So that many times he that puts the first ill Character, fixes the stamp which afterwards goes current in the world. The generality of people take up prejudices (as they do religions) upon trust: and of those that are more curious in inquiring into the grounds, there are not many who vary on the more charitable hand, or bring the common sentence to review, with intent to

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moderate but inhance it. Men are apt to think it some disparagement to their acuteness and invention, if they cannot say something as sharp upon the subject, as has bin said before; and so 'tis the business of many to lay on more load, but of few to take off: and therefore he that passes the first condemnatory sentence, is like the incendiary in a popular tumult, who is chargeable with all those disorders to which he gave the first rise, tho that free not his Abettors from their share of the guilt.

27. AND as this is very uncharitable in respect of the injury offer'd, so also is it in reflection on the grand rule of Charity. Can we pretend to love our neighbors as our selves, and yet shall our love to him have the quite contrary effects to that we bear our selves? Can self-love lessen our beam into a mote, and yet can our love to him magnify his mote into a beam? No certainly, true Charity is more sincere, do's not turn to us the reverse end of the perspective, to represent our own faults at a distance, and in the most diminutive size, and yet shuffle the other to us when we are to view his. No, these are Tricks of

Legerdemain we read in another Schole, even in his whose stile is *the accuser of the brethren*. We know how frequently God protests against false weights and false measures. And sure 'tis not only in the shop or market that he abhors them, they are no less abominable in conversation then in traffic. To buy by one measure and sell by another, is not more unequal, then it is to have these differing standards for our own and our neighbors faults, that our own shall weigh, in the Prophet Jeremies Phrase, *lighter then vanity, yea nothing*, and yet his (tho really the lighter) shall prove Zacharies talent of lead. This is such a partiality, as consists not with common honesty, and can therefore never be reconciled with Christian Charity: and how demurely soever such men may pretend to sanctity, that interrogation of God presses hard upon them, *shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?* Mich. 6. 11. Such bitter invectives against other mens faults, and indulgence or palliation of their own, shews their zeal lies in their spleen, and that they consider not so much what is don, as who do's

do's it: and to such the sentence of the Apostle is very applicable, Rom. 2. 1. *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thy self, for thou that judgest dost the same thing.* But admit a man have not the very same guilts he censures in another, yet 'tis sure every man has some; and of what sort soever they be, he desires not they should berigorously scan'd, and therefore by the rule of Charity, yea and Justice too, ought not to do that which he would not suffer. If he can find extenuations for his own crimes, he is in all reason to presume others may have so for theirs: the common frailty of our nature, as it is apt alike to betray us to faults, so it gives as equal share in the excuse; and therefore what I would have pass for the effect of impotency or inadvertence in my self, I can with no tolerable ingenuity give a worse name to in him.

28. WE have now viewed both these branches of Detraction, seen both the sin and mischiefs of them; we may now join them together in a concluding observation, which is, that they are as im-

prudent as they are unchristian. It has bin received among the maxims of civil life, not unnecessarily to exasperate any body; to which agrees the advice of an ancient Philosopher, Speak not evil of thy neighbor, if thou dost thou shalt hear that which will not fail to trouble thee. There is no Person so inconsiderable, but may at some time or other do a displeasure: but in this of Defaming men need no harnessing, no preparation: every man has his weapons ready for a return: so that none can shoot these arrows, but they must expect they will revert with a rebounded force; not only to the violation of Christian Unity (as I have before observ'd) but to the Aggressors great secular detriment, both in fame, and oftentimes interest also. Revenge is sharp-sighted, and overlooks no opportunity of a retaliation; and that commonly not bounded as the Levitical ones were, *An eie for an eie, a tooth for a tooth*, Exod. 21. 24. no nor by the larger proportions of their restitutions *fourfold*, Exod. 22. 1. but extended to the utmost power of the inflicter. The examples are innumerable of men who have thus laid themselves open in  
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their greatest concerns, and have let loose the hands as well as Tongues of others against them, merely because they would put no restraint upon their own: which is so great indiscretion, that to them we may well apply that of Solomon, *A fools mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.* Prov. 18. 7.

29. AND now who can sufficiently wonder, that a practice that so thwarts our interest of both worlds, should come universally to prevail among us? Yet that it do's so, I may appeal to the consciences of most, and to the observation of all. What so common Topic of discourse is there, as this of backbiting our neighbors? Come into company of all Ages, all Ranks, all Professions, this is the constant entertainment: And I doubt he that at night shall duly recollect the occurrences of the day, shall very rarely be able to say; he has spent it without hearing or speaking (perhaps both) somewhat of this kind. Nay even those who restrain themselves other liberties, are often apt to indulge to this: many who are so just to their neighbors property, that as Abraham once said, Gen. 14. 23. *they would not take*



*take from him, even from a thred to a shoe latchet*, are yet so inconsiderate of his Fame, as to find themselves discourse at the expence of that, tho infinitely a greater injury then the robbing of his Coffer: which shew's what false measures we are apt to take of things, and evinces that many of those, who have not only in general abjur'd the world in their baptism, but do in many instances seem to themselves (as well as others) to have gain'd a superiority over it, do yet in this undiscernably yield it the greatest ensign of Sovereignty, by permitting it to set the standards and estimates of things, and taking its customary Prescriptions for Laws. For what besides this unhappy servility to custom, can possibly reconcile men that own Christianity, to a practice so widely distant from it? 'Tis true those that profess themselves men of this world, who design only their portion in this life, may take it up as sometimes conducing (at least seemingly) to their end: but for those who propose higher hopes to themselves, and know that Charity is one of the main props to those hopes, how foolishly do they undermine themselves, when they thus  
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act against their principles, and that upon no other Authority, but that of popular usage? I know men are apt to excuse themselves upon their indignation against vice, and think that their zeal must as well acquit them for this violation of the second Table, as it once did Moses for the breaking both, Ex. 32. 19. But to such I may answer in Christs words, Luke 9. 55. *You know not what manner of spirit you are of.* Meekness and Charity are the Evangelical graces, which will most recommend and assimilate us to him, who was meek and lowly in heart. But after all this pretext of Zeal, I fear it is but a cheat we put on our selves, the Elder brothers raiment only to disguise the Supplanter. Gen. 27. Let men truly ransack their own breasts, and I doubt the best will find there is something of vanity which lies at the bottom, if it be not the positive sort mention'd before, of designing to illustrate my self by others blemishes, yet at least the negative, that I am unwilling to incur the content incident to those, who scruple at small sins. Besides I observe perhaps, that 'tis the common entertainment of the world, to defame  
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their neighbors, and if I strike not in upon the Theme, I shall have nothing to render me acceptable company; perhaps I shall be reproched as morose or dull, and my silence shall be construed to proceed not from the abundance of my Charity, but the defect of my Wit.

30. BUT sure they that can thus argue, do hereby give a more demonstrative proof of that defect. He whose wit is so precarious, that it must depend only upon the folly or vice of another, had best give over all pretence to it. He that has nothing of his own growth to set before his guests, had better make no invitations, then break down his neighbors inclosure, and feast them upon his plunder. Besides how pitiful an attestation of wit is it, to be able to make a disgraceful relation of another? No scolding woman but may set up such Trophies: and they that can value a man upon such an account, may prefer the Scarabes, who feed upon dung, and are remark'd by no other property, before the Bee that sucks flowers and returns hony.

31. BUT in the next place admit this restraint should certainly expose one to  
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that reproch ; methinks this should be no news to those who know the condition of Christianity is to take up the Cross : and sure it cannot weigh lighter then in this instance, What am I the worse if a vain Talkative Person think me too reserv'd ? Or if he, whose frolic levity is his disease, call me dull, because I vapor not out all my spirits into froth ? *Socrates* when inform'd of some derogating Speeches one had used of him behind his back, made only this facetious reply, Let him beat me too when I am absent. And he that gets not such an indifference to all the idle censures of men, will be disturb'd in all his civil transaction, as well as his Christian : it being scarce possible to do any thing, but there will be descants made on it. And if a man will regard those winds, he must, as *Solomon* saies, *never sow*, Eccl. 11. 4. He must suspend even the necessary actions of common life, if he will not venture them to the being misjudged by others.

32. B u t there is yet a farther consideration in this matter : for he that upon such a despicable motive will violate his duty in one particular, lets Sa-

tan get a main point of him, and can with no good Logic deny to do it in others. Detraction is not the only sin in fashion: Profaneness, and Obscenity, and all sorts of Luxury are so too, and threaten no less reproch to those who scruple at them. Upon the same grounds therefore that he discards his Charity to his neighbor, he may also his Piety, his Modesty, his Temperance, and almost all other virtues. And to speak the truth, there is not a more fertile womb of sin, then this dread of ill mens reproch. Other corruptions must be gratifi'd with cost and industry, but in this the Devil hath no farther trouble then to laugh men out of their souls. So prolific a vice therefore had need be weeded out of mens hearts: for if it be allowed the least corner, if it be indulged too in this one instance, 'twill quickly spread it self farther.

33. YET after all, this fear of reproch is a mere fallacy, started to disguise a more real cause of fear: for the greater danger of reproch do's indeed lie on that other side. Common estimation puts an ill Character upon pragmatic meddling people. For tho the inquisi-  
tiveness



tiveness and curiosity of the hearer, may sometimes render such discourses grateful enough to him, yet it leaves in him no good impressions of the speaker. This is well observ'd by the Son of Sirach, Ecclus. 19. 8, 9. *Whether it be to friend or foe, talk not of other mens lives, and if thou canst without offence, revele them not, for he heard and observ'd thee, and when time cometh he will hate thee.* In a word all considering Persons will be ever upon their guard in such company, as foreseeing that they will talk no less freely of them, then they do of others before them. Nor can the commonness of the guilt obviate the censure, there being nothing more frequent then for men to accuse their own faults in other Persons. Vice is like a dark Lantern, which turns its bright side only to him that bears it; but looks blak and dismal in anothers hand: and in this particular none has so much reason to fear a Defamer, as those who are themselves such: for (besides the common prudential motive) their own consciousness gives them an inward alarm, and makes them look for a retribution in the same kind. Thus upon the whole matter we

see, there is no real temptation, even to our vanity, to comply with this uncharitable custom, we being sure to lose more repute by it, than we can propose to our selves to gain. The being esteem'd an ill man will not be balanced by being thought pleasant, ingenuous company, were one sure to be so. But 'tis odds that will not be acquired by it neither, for the most assiduous talebearers and bitterest revilers are often half-witted people: there being nothing more frequently observed, than such mens aptness to speak evil of things they understand not, Jude v. 10.

34. O Let not then those that have repudiated the more inviting sins, shew themselves philt'r'd and bewitch'd by this, but instead of submitting to the ill example of others, set a good one to them, and endeavor to bring this unchristian custom out of fashion; I am sure if they do not, they will be more deeply chargeable than others: for the more command they have over their other corruption, the more do they witness against themselves. Their remissness and willing subjection to this, besides their example when ill, is more ensnaring than other mens, and is apt

to insinuate easy thoughts of the sin. Men are apt to think themselves safe while they follow one of noted piety, and the authority of his Person often leads them blindfold into his failings. Thus when *Peter* disssembled, *St Paul* tells us that the other *Jews and even Barnabas also was carried away with his dissimulation.* Galat. 2. 13. And I doubt not in this particular many are encouraged by the liberty they see even good men take. So that such have a more accumulative guilt, for they do not only commit, but patronize the fault: the consideration whereof has kept me I confess, longer upon this head than is proportionable to the brevity of the rest? but I think not longer then agrees to the importance of the subject.

35. AND now since we have consider'd the malignity of this sin of Detraction, and yet withall find that 'tis a sin, which as the Apostle speaks, *doth so easily beset us*, 'tis but a natural Corollary that we enforce our vigilance against it. And where the importance and difficulty are both so great, 'twill be a little necessary to consider what are the likeliest means, the most appropriate Antidote  
against

against this so dangerous , and yet so Epidemic a disease.

36. AND here the common rule of Physic is to be adverted to, viz. to examine the causes , that the remedies may be adapted to them. I shall therefore in the first place desire every man seriously to study his own constitution of mind , and observe what are his particular temptations to this sin of Detraction , whether any of those I have before mention'd , as Pride , Envy , Levity , &c. or any other which lies deeper , and is only discernible to his own inspection. Let him , I say , make the scrutiny , and then accordingly apply himself to correct the sin in its first principle. For as when there is an eruption of Humor in any part 'tis not cured merely by outward applications , but by such alterative Medicines as purify the blood ; so this Leprosy of the Tongue will still spread farther , if it be not check'd in its Spring and source , by the mortifying of those corrupt inclinations , which feed and heighten it.

37. THIS is an inquisition I must leave to every mans own Conscience , which alone can testify by what impulses



pulses he acts. Yet as the Rabbins were wont to say, that in every Signal Judgment which befel the Jews, there was some grain of the Golden-calf; so I think I may venture to say, that in all Detraction, there is some mixture of Pride: and therefore I suppose, a Caution against that, will be so generally seasonable, that it may well lead the Van of all other advices in this matter. And here 'tis very observable, that God who has *made of one blood all Nations of the earth*, Act. 17. has so equally distributed all the most valuable privileges of Human nature, as if he design'd to preclude all insulting of one man over another. Neither has he only thus insinuated it by his Providence, but has inforc'd it by his commands. In the Levitical Law we find what a particular care he takes to moderate the rigor of Judicial correction, upon this very account, lest *thy Brother be despised in thine eyes*, Deut. 25. 3. So unreasonable did he think it, that the crime or misery of one, should be the exultation of another. And *S. Paul* brands it as a great guilt of the *Corinthians*, that they upon the occasion of the incestuous Person  
*were*



*were puffed up, when they should have mourned*, 1. Cor. 5. 2. When we see a dead Corps, we are not apt to insult over it, or brag of our own health and vigor; but it rather damps us, and makes us reflect, that it may (we know not how soon) be our own condition. And certainly the spectacles of Spiritual mortality should have the same operation. We have the same principles of Corruption with our lapsed Brethren, and have nothing but Gods grace, to secure us from the same effects, and by these insulting reflections forfeit that too; *for he gives grace only to the humble*, Jam. 4. 6. St. Paul's advice therefore is very apposite to this case, Gal. 6. 1. *Brethren if a man be overtaken in a fault; restore such a one in the spirit of Meekness; considering thy self; least thou also be tempted.* In a word the faults of others ought to excite our pity towards them, our caution as to our selves, and our thankfulness to God, if he hath hitherto preserv'd us from the like, *For who made thee to differ from another?* 1. Cor. 4. 7. But if we spread our Sails and triumph over these wrecks, we expose our selves to worse. Other sins like Rocks may split us,  
yet

yet the lading may be preserv'd: but Pride like a Gulf swallows us up; our very vertues when so leavened, becoming weights and plummets to sink us to the deeper ruine. The counsel therefore of the Apostle, is very pertinent to this matter. Rom. II. 20. *Be not high minded, but fear.*

38. BUT God knows we can insult over others when we are not only under a possibility, but are actually involv'd in the same guilt: and then what are all our accusations and bitter censures of others, but indictments and condemnatory sentences against our selves? And we may justly expect God should take us at our word, and reply upon us as the Prophet did upon *David*, *Thou art the man.* 2 Sam. 12. 7. For tho our officious vehemence against anothers crime, may blind the eies of men, yet God is not so mocked, As therefore when a thief or murderer is detected, it gives an alarm to the whole confederacy; so when we find our own guilts pursued in other mens Persons, 'tis not a time for us to join in the prosecution, but rather by humble and penitent reflections on our selves to provide for our own safety.

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When therefore we find our selves (upon any misdemeanor of our brother) ready to mount the tribunal, and pronounce our sentence, let us first consider how competent we are for the office, calling to mind the decision Christ once made in the like case, *He that is without sin let him first cast a stone*, Joh. 8. 7. And if we did this, many perhaps of our fiercest impeachers, would think fit to retire and leave the delinquent (as they themselves finally desire to be) to the merciful indulgence of a Savior. In short, would we but look into our own hearts, we should find so much work for our inquisitions and censure, that we should not be at leisure to ramble abroad for it. And therefore as *Lycurgus* once said to one, who importun'd him to establish a popular parity in the state, Do thou, saies he, begin it first in thine own family: so I shall advise those that will be judging, to practice first at home. And if they will confine themselves to that, till there be nothing left to correct, I doubt not their neighbor will be well enough secur'd against their Detractions.

39. ANOTHER preservation against  
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that sin is the frequent contemplation of the last and great judgment. This is indeed a Catholicon against all: but we find it particularly appli'd by St. *Paul* to this of judging and despising our Brethren. *Why dost thou judg thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? We shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.* Rom. 14. 10. That is the great day of Revelation and retribution, and we are not to anticipate it by our private inquests or sentences: we have business enough to provide our own accounts against that day. And as it were a spiteful folly for Malefactors that were going together to the bar, to spend their time in exaggerating each others crimes: so surely is it for us, who are all going toward the dreadful tribunal, to be drawing up Charges against one another. And who knows but we may then meet with the fate of *Daniels* accusers, see him we censur'd acquit, and our selves doomed. The penitence of the criminal may have numbred him among the Saints, when our unretracted uncharitableness may send us to unquenchable Flames. I conclude this consideration with the words of St. *James*, *There is one*

*Lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy, who art thou that judgest another ?* Jam.

4. 12.

40. A third expedient may be, to try to make a revulsion of the humor, to draw it into another chanel. If we must needs be talking of other peoples faults, let it not be to defame ; but to amend them, by converting our Detraction and backbiting into Admonition and fraternal correption. This is a way to extract medecine out of the viper, to consecrate even this so unhallow'd a part of our temper, and to turn the ungrateful meddling of a busy-body, into the most obliging office of a friend. And indeed had we that zeal for vertue, which we pretend when we inveigh against vice, we should surely lay it out this way, for this only gives a possibility of reforming the offender. But alas we order the matter so, as if we fear'd to lose the occasion of Clamor, and will tell all the world but him that it most concerns. Indeed 'tis a deplorable thing to see how universally this necessary Christian duty is neglected ; and to that neglect we may in a great degree impute that strange overflowing of Detraction



among us. We know the receiving any thing into our Charge, insensibly begets a love and tenderneſs to it (a nurse upon this account comes often to vie kindneſs with the mother: ) and would we but take one another thus into our care, and by friendly vigilance thus watch over each others ſouls, 'tis ſcarce imaginable what an endearment it would create: ſuch certainly as would infallibly ſupplant all our unkind reportings, and ſevere deſcants upon our brethren; ſince thoſe can never take place, but when there is at leaſt an indifference, if not an enmity.

41. THE next cure I ſhall propoſe for Detraction, is to ſubſtract its nurſhment, by ſuppreſſing all Curioſity and inquiſitivenefs concerning others. Were all ſupplies thus cut off, it would at laſt be ſubdued. The King of Ethiopia in a vie of Wit with the King of Egypt, propoſ'd it as a Problem to him, to drink up the Sea, to which he repli'd, by requiring him firſt to ſtop the acceſs of Rivers to it: and he that would drain this other Ocean, muſt take the ſame courſe, dam up the avenues of thoſe Springs which feed it. He  
that

that is alwaies upon the scent, hunting out some discovery of others, will be very apt to invite his neighbors to the quarry; and therefore 'twill be necessary for him, to restrain himself from that range: not like jealous States, to keep Spies and pensioners abroad to bring him intelligence, but rather discourage all such officious pick-thanks: for the fuller he is of such informations, the more is his pain if he keep them in, and his guilt if he publish them. Could men be perswaded to affect a wholesome ignorance in these matters, it would conduce both to their ease and innocence: for 'tis this Itch of the ear which breaks out at the Tongue: and were not Curiosity the Purveyor, Detraction would soon be starved into a tameness.

42. BUT the most infallible receipt of all, is the frequent recollecting, and serious applying of the grand rule, of doing as we would be don to: for as Detraction is the violation of that, so the observation of that must certainly supplant Detraction. Let us therefore when we find the humor fermenting within us, and ready to break out in Declamations against our brethren, Let  
us,

us, I say, check it with this short question, Would I my self be thus us'd? This voice from within, will be like that from heaven to St. Paul, which stopt him in the height of his carrier, Act. 9. 4. And this voice every man may hear, that will not stop his ears, nor gag his conscience, it being but the Echo of that native Justice and equity which is planted in our hearts: and when we have our remedy so near us, and will not use it, God may well expostulate with us, as he did with the Jews, *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* Ezek. 33. 11.

43. THESE are some of those many receipts which may be prescrib'd against this spreading disease. But indeed there is not so much need to multiply remedies, as to perswade men to apply them. We are in love with our Malady, and as loth to be cured of the Luxury of the Tongue, as S. *Augustine* was of his other Sensuality, against which he praied with a Caveat; that he might not be too soon heard. But 'tis ill dallying, where our Souls are concern'd: for alas 'tis they that are wounded by those darts, which we throw at others. We take our aim perhaps at our Neighbors, but indeed hit  
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our selves: herein verifying in the highest Sense that Axiom of the Wise-man, *He that diggeth a pit, shall fall into it, and he that roleteth a stone, it shall return upon him.* Prov. 25. 27. If therefore we have no tenderness, no relenting to our Brethren, yet let us have some to our selves; so much compassion, nay so much respect to our precious immortal Souls, as not set them at so despicable a price, to put them in balance with the satisfying of a petulant peevish vanity. Surely the shewing our selves ill-natur'd (which is all the gain Detraction amounts to) is not so enamouring a design, that we should sacrifice to it our highest interest. 'Tis too much to spend our breath in such a pursuit, O let not our souls also exhale in the vapor; but let us rather pour them out in prayers for our brethren, then in accusations of them: for tho both the one and the other will return into our own bosoms, yet God knows to far differing purposes, even as differing as those wherewith we utter them. The Charity of the one like kindly exhalations will descend in showers of blessings, but the rigor and asperity of the other, in a severe doom upon our selves: for the A-



postle will tell us, *He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy*, James 2. 13.

SECT. VII.

*Of Scoffing and Derision.*

THERE is also another fault of the Tongue injurious to our neighbor, and that is Derision and Mockery; and striving to render others as ridiculous and contemptible as we can. This in respect of the subject matter differs from the other of Detraction, as much as folly or deformity do's from vice: yet since injuries as well as benefits, are to be mesured by common estimation, this may come in balance with the other. There is such a general aver-sation in human nature to content, that there is scarce any thing more exasperating. I will not deny but the excess of the aver-sation may be level'd against Pride: yet sure scorn and disdain never sprung from humility, and therefore are

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very incompetent Correctors of the other; so that it may be said of that, as once it was of *Diogenes*, that he trampled on *Plato's* Pride with greater of his own.

2. NOR is this injury enhanced only by the resentment of the sufferer, but also by the way of inflicting it. We generally think those are the severest marks of infamy, which are the most indelible. To be burnt in the hand or pilloried, is a more lasting reproch than to be scourged or confined; and it is the same in this case, for here commonly Wit is the Lictor, which is arm'd with an edg'd tool, and leaves scars behind it. The reproch of rage and fury seem to be writ in Chalk or Lead, which a dispassionate hearer easily wipes out, but those of Wit are like the gravers burine upon copper; or the corrodings of Aqua-fortis, engrave and indent the Characters that they can never be defaced. The truth of this daily experience attests. A dull contumely quickly vanishes, no body thinking it worth remembring, but when 'tis steel'd with Wit, it pierces deep; leaves such impressions in the fancy of the hearers, that thereby it gets rooting in the memory, and will

will scarce be eradicated: nay sometimes it happens to survive both speaker and hearer, and conveys it self to posterity; it being not unusual for the sarcasms of Wit to be transmitted in story. And as it thus gives an edg, so also do's it add wings to a reproch, makes it fly abroad in an instant. Many a poor mans infirmities had bin confined to the notice of a few relations or neighbors, had not some remarkable strein of drollery scatter'd and dispersed them. The jest recommends the Defamation, and is commonly so incorporate with it, that they cannot be related apart. And even those who like it not in one respect, yet are many times so transported with it in the other, that they chuse rather to propagate the contumely, then stifle the conceit. Indeed Wit is so much the *Diana* of this age, that he who goes about to set any bounds to it, must expect an *uproar*, Acts 19. 28. or at least to be judg'd to have imposed an envious inhibition on it, because himself has not stock enough to maintain the trade. But how ever sharp or unexpected the censure may seem to be, yet 'tis necessary that plain downright truth should sometimes

be spoken, and I think that will bear me out, if I say 'tis possible men may be as oppressive by their parts, as their power; and that God did no more design the meaner intellectualls of some for triumphs to the Pride and vanity of the more acute, then he did the possessions of the less powerful, as a prey to the rapine and avarice of the mighty.

3. AND this suggests a yet farther aggravation of this sin, as it is a perverting of Gods design, and abuse of the talent he has committed to men in trust. Ingenuity and quickness of parts, is sure to be reckoned in the highest ranks of Blessing, and an instrument proper for the most excellent purposes: and therefore we cannot suppose the Divine wisdom so much short of Human, as not in his intention to assign it to uses worthy of it. Those must relate either to God, our selves, or our neighbors. In respect of God, it renders us more capable of contemplating his Perfections, discerning the Equity and excellence of his Laws; and our obligations to obedience. In regard of our selves it makes us apprehend our own interest in that obedience; makes us tractable and

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perswasible, contrary to that Brutish stubbornness of the Horse and Mule, which the Psalmist reproches, Psal. 32. 9. Besides it accommodates us in all the concerns of Human life, forms it self into all those useful contrivances, which may make our being here more comfortable: especially it renders a man company to himself, and in the greatest dearth of Society, entertains him with his own thoughts. Lastly, as to our neighbors, it renders us useful and assistant. All those discoveries and experiments, those Arts and Sciences, which are now the common treasure of the world, took their first rise from the ingenuity of particular persons: and in all Personal exigencies wherein any of us are at any time involved, we need not be told the usefulness of a wise adviser. Now all these are employments commensurable to the faculty from whence they flow, and that answer its excellence and value; and he that so bestows his talent, gives a good account of his trust. But I would fain know under which of these Heads Derision of our Neighbor comes in: certainly not under that of being assistant to him. It would be a sorry relief to a  
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poor indigent wretch, to lavish out wit upon him, in upbraiding of his misery. And is not this a parallel case? Is it not the same Barbarism, to mock and reproch a man that wants the gifts of Nature, as him that wants those of Fortune? Nay perhaps it may be more, for a Beggar may have impoverisht himself by his own fault, but in Natural defects there is nothing to be charged, unless we will fly higher, and arraign that Providence that hath so dispensed. In a word as the Superfluities of the Rich are by God assign'd as the store-house of the poor, so the Abilities of the Wise are of the ignorant: for 'tis a great mistake, to think our selves Stewards in some of Gods gifts, and proprietaries in others. They are all equally to be employed, according to the designation of the Donor, and there is nothing more universally design'd by him, then that mankind should be equally helpful to one another. Those therefore whom God hath blest with higher degrees of sagacity and quickness, ought not to look down on others as the objects of their content or scorn, but rather of their care and pity, endeavoring to rescue them



them from those mischiefs, to which their weakness may expose them, remembering still, that God might have changed the Scene, and made themselves what they see others. It is part of *Jobs* justification of his integrity, that *he was eies to the Blind, and feet to the Lamé*, Job. 29. 25. (*i. e.*) he accommodated his assistances to all the wants and exigencies of others: and sure 'tis no less the part of a good man to do it in the Mental then in the Corporeal defects.

4. BUT alas many of us would rather put a stumbling block in the way of the Blind, pull away the Crutch from the Lamé, that we may sport ourselves to see them tumble: such a sensuality we have in observing and improving the imperfections of others, that it is become the grand excellence of the Age to be Dextrous at it, and Wit serves some men for little else. We are got indeed into a merry world, Laughing is our main business; as if because it has bin made part of the Definition of man, that he is *Risible*, his man-hood consisted in nothing else. But alas if that be all the use men have of their understandings; they were given them to little purpose

pose, since mere Idiots can laugh with as much plesure and more innocence then they; and it is a great instance how extremes may be brought to meet, that the excess of Wit in the one, and of Folly in the other, serve to produce the same effect.

5. YET so voracious is this humor now grown, that it draws in every thing to feed it. There is not game enough from the reall folly of the world, and therefore that which is the most distant from it must be stamp't with its mark. 'Tis a known story of the Frier who on a fasting day bid his Capon be Carp, and then very Canonically ate it; and by such a transubstantiating power our Wits bid all seriousness and consideration be formality and foppery, and then under that name endeavor to hunt it out of the world. I fear moral honesty fares not better with some of them then moral prudence. The old Philosophical vertues of Justice, Temperance, and Chastity are now hift off the stage, as fit only for the Antiquated set of Actors, and he that appears in that equipage, is by many thought more ridiculous, then he that walks the street in his

his Ancestors trunk hose. Nay indeed vice it self is scarce secure if it have not the grand accomplishment of impudence: a puny blushing sinner is to be laugh out of his Modesty, tho not out of his sin; and to be proof against their scorns he must first be so against all the regrets of his own mind.

6. AND if mere Ethnic virtue, or shamefaced vice have this treatment, Christian Piety must expect worse: and so indeed it finds, its professors being beyond all others exposed to their scorn and contempt. Nor is it strange it should be so, such men being *made*, as it is Wisd. 2. 14. *to reprove their waies*, they think in their own defence they are to deride theirs. This is it indeed which gives a secret sting and venom to their reproches: other men they abuse as an exercise of their Wit, but these in defence of the party. So *Julian* after his Apostacy, thought it a more effectual way to persecute the Christians by taunts and ironies, then by racks and tortures, as thinking it more possible to shame, then fright them out of their religion, And the stratagem seems to have bin reassumed by many in this age, and I

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fear with too great success: for I doubt not there are divers who have herded themselves amongst these profane Scoffers, not that they are convinced by their reasons, but terrified by their contumelies; and as some Indians are said to worship the Devil, that he may not hurt them; so these chuse to be active, that they may not be passive in the contents flung upon religion: such men forget the dreadful denunciation of Christ against those that shall *be ashamed of him and his words*. Mat. 8. 38.

7. As for those who, upon a juster estimate, find the advantages of piety worthy to be chosen, and take it with all its necessary ignominies, they have the encouragement of very good company in their sufferings. The Psalmist long ago had his share, when not only *Those that sate in the gate spake against him, but the drunkards made songs upon him*, Psalm. 69. 12. 'Twas also the Prophet Jeremies complaint, *I am in Desolation dayly, every one mocketh me*, Jer. 20. 7. Nay our blessed Lord himself was derided in his life by the Pharisees, Luke 16. 14. mocked and reviled at his death by the Priests, the Elders, the Sol-

Soldiers; nay by casual passengers, Mat. 27. 39. And shall the servant think himself greater than his Lord? Shall a Christian expect an immunity from what his Savior has born before him? (He that do's so, is too delicate a member for a crucified head.) No sure, let us rather animate our selves, as the Apostle exhorts, by *considering him who as well despised the shame, as endured the cross for us*, Heb. 12. 3. and who has not only given an example, but proposed a reward, a Beatitude to those who are *re-warded for righteousness sake*, Mat. 3. 11. And when this is soberly ponder'd, 'twill sure make it easy for us to resolve with holy *David* in a like case, *I will be yet more vile*, 2 Sam. 6. 22.

8. BUT to return from this digression, to those who thus unhappily employ their parts, let me propose to them, that they would borrow every day some few minutes from their mirth, and seriously consider, whether this be (I need not say a Christian, but) a manly exercise of their faculties. Alas when they have rallied out the day from one company to another, they may sum up their account at night in the wise mans si-



mile, their *Laughter has bin but like the crackling of Thorns under a pot*, Ecclus. 6. 7. made a little brisk noise for the present, and with the sparkles perhaps annoied their Neighbors, but what real good has it brought to themselves? All that they can fancy is but the repute of Wit. But sure that might be attainable some other way. We find the world affected to new things, and this of Derision and abuse to others is so beaten a road, that perhaps the very variety of a new way would render it acceptable. They are the lighter substances that still swim away with the stream, the greater and more solid bodies do sometimes stop the current: and sure 'twere a noble essay of a mans parts to stem this tide, and by a more useful application of their own faculties, convince others that theirs might be better employed. 'Tis said of *Anacharsis*, that at a feast he could not be got to smile at the affected railleries of common Jesters, but when an ape was brought in he freely laught, saying, an ape was ridiculous by nature, but men by art and study. And truly 'tis a great contempt of human nature to think their intellects were given them  
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for no better end then to raise that laughter, which a brute can do as well or better.

9. I would not be thought to recommend such a Stoical sourness, as shall admit of nothing of the cheerful pleasant part of Conversation. God has not sure bin more rigid to our Minds then to our Bodies: and as he has not so devoted the one to toil, but that he allows us some time to exercise them in recreation as well as labors, so doubtless he indulges the same relaxation to our Minds: which are not alwaies to be scrued up to the height, but allowed to descend to those easinesses of Converse, which entertain the lower Faculties of the Soul. Nor do I think those are ill employed in those little skirmishes of Wit, which pass familiarly between intimates and acquaintances, which besides the present divertisement, serve to whet and quicken the fancy. Yet I conceive this liberty is to be bounded with some Cautions: as first in these entercounters, the Charge should be Powder not Bullets; there should nothing be said that should leave any ungrateful impressions, or give any umbrage of a spiteful intent. The world  
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wants not experiments of the mischiefs have happened by too severe Railleries: in such Fencing jest has proved earnest, and Florets have oft turn'd to Swords, and not only the Friendship, but the Men have fallen a Sacrifice to a Jest.

19. SECONDLY this is to have the same restriction with all other recreations, that it be made a divertisement, not a trade. 'Tis an insinuating thing, and is apt to encroach too much upon our time, and God knows we have a great deal of business of this world, and much more for the next, which will not be don with laughing, and therefore 'tis not for us to play away too much of that time, which is exacted by more serious concerns. 'Tis sure we shall die in Earnest, and it will not become us to live altogether in Jest. But besides this stealth of our time, 'tis apt to steal away mens hearts too, make them so dote upon this kind of entertainment, that it averts them from any thing more serious. I believe I may appeal to some who have made this their business, whether it go not against the hair with them to set to any thing else: and having espoused this as their one excellence, they are willing to de-  
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cry all others, that they may the more value themselves upon this. By this means it is, that the gift of Raillery has in this Age, like the lean kine, devour'd all the more solid worthy qualifications; and is counted the most reputable accomplishment. A strange inverted estimate; thus to prefer the little ebullitions of Wit, before solid reason and judgment. If they would accommodate their Diet at the same rate, they shall eat the Husk, rather than the Kernel, and drink nothing but froth and bubbles. But after all, Wisdom is commonly at long running justified even of her Despisers; these great Idolaters of Wit often dashing themselves upon such Rocks, as make them too late wish, their Sailes had bin less, and their Ballast more. For the preventing therefore of more such wracks, I wish the present caution may be more adverted to, not to bestow an unproportionable part of our time or value on this slight exercise of mans slightest Faculty.

II. A third Caution in this matter, is to confine our selves to present Company, not to make absent Persons the Subject of our mirth. Those freedoms we  
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use to a mans face as they are commonly more moderate, so they are more equitable, because we expose our selves to the like from him; but the back blowes are disingenuous, and give suspicion we intend not a fair trial of Wit, but a cowardly murder of a mans fame. 'Twas the precept of the Philosopher, *Deride not the absent*, and I think it may well be so of the Politician: there being nothing more imprudent as to our civil concerns then the contrary liberty. For those things never die in the company they are first vented in (nay perhaps the hearer is not willing his wit should so soon expire;) and when they once take air, they quickly come to the notice of the derided Person, and then nothing in the world is more disobliging. 'Twas a sober precept given once, not so much as to laugh in compliance with him that derides another, for you will be hated by him he derides. And if an accessary be hated, sure much more the principal: and I think I may say, there are many can sooner forgive a solemn deep contrivance against them, then one of their jocular reproches: for he that designs seems to acknowledg them considerable, but he  
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that mocks them, seems to think them too low for any thing but content: and we learn from Aristotle, that the measure of anger is entirely taken thence; men being so far provoked, as they imagine they were slighted or affronted. In mere secular wisdom it will therefore become men to consider, whether this trade be like to turn to account, or whether it be worth the while, at once to make a jest and an enemy.

12. AND if it be imprudent to make man our enemy, 'tis much more to make God so, by levelling our blowes at any thing sacred: but of that I have already had occasion to speak, and shall not repeat; only give me leave to say, that besides the profaner sort of jests, which more immediately reflect on him, he is concern'd in all the unjust reproches of our brethren, our love to them being confirm'd by the same divine Sanction with our reverence to him: and sure nothing is more inconsistent with that love, then the exposing them to that content we are our selves so impatient of. In a word what repute soever this practice now has of Wit, it is very far from wisdom to provoke God that we may also disob-

lige man: and if we will take the Scripture estimate, we shall find a Scorners is no such honorable Epithet as we seem to account it. *Solomon* do's almost constantly set it in opposition to a Wise man: thus it is, Prov. 9. 8. and again Chap. 13. 1. and many other places; and on the other side, closely links it with the Fool: and that not only in title, but in punishment too, *Judgments are prepared for scorers, and stripes for the back of fools*, Prov. 19. 29. So that if our Wits think not *Solomon* too dull for their Cabal, we see what a turn he will give to their present verdict.

13. AND if these reproches which aim only at ostentation of Wit, be so unjustifiable, what shall we say to those, that are drawn with blacker lines, that are founded in Malice or Envy, or some undermining design? Every man that is to be supplanted cannot alwaies be attacked with a down-right battery: perhaps his integrity may be such, that, as 'twas said of *Daniel* Chap. 6. 4. *They can find no occasion against him*: and when they cannot shake the main Fort, they must try if they can possess themselves of the out-works, raise some prejudice

dice against his discretion, his humor, his carriage, and his most extrinsic adherents, and if by representing him ridiculous in any of these they can but abate mens reverence to him, their confidence of him will not long hold out; bare honesty without some other adornment, being lookt on as a leaf-less tree, no body will trust himself to its shelter. Thus the enemies of *Socrates*, when they could no other waies suppress his reputation, hired *Aristophanes* a Comic Poet to personate him on the stage, and by the insinuations of those interludes, insensibly conveyed first a contempt, and then a hatred of him into the hearts of the people. But I need not bring instances of former times in this matter, these being sufficiently versd in that mystery.

14. IT is not strange that men of such designs, should summon all their Wit to the service, make their Railleries as picquant as they can, that they may wound the deeper: but methinks 'tis but a mean office they assign their Wit, to be (I will not say the Pander, that being in this age scarce a title of reproch, but) the executioner or hangman to their malice. Christ bids us *be-wise as Ser-*

*pents*, yet adds withall *harmless as Doves*; Mat. 10. 18. but here the Serpent has quite eat up the Dove, and puts a Vultur in the place, a creature of such sagacity and diligence in pursuit of the prey, that 'tis hard for any art or innocence to escape its talons.

15. THERE is yet another sort of Contumelious Persons, who indeed are not chargeable with that circumstance, of ill employing their Wit, for they use none in it. These are people whose sole talent is Pride and Scorn; who perhaps have attained the Sciences of dressing themselves finely and eating well, and upon the strength of those excellences, look fastidiously, and speak disdainfully on any who want them; concluding if a man fall short of their Garniture at the Knees and Elbowes, he is much inferior to them in the furniture of his Head. Such people think crying, *Oridiculous!* is an ample Confutation of any thing can be said; and so they can but despise enough, are contented not to be able to say why they do so. These are, I confess, the most innocent kind of Deriders in respect of others, what they say having not edg enough  
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to cause any smart. The greatest hurt they do is to themselves, who tho they much need, yet are generally little capable of a rescue, and therefore I shall not clog the present discourse with any advise to them: I shall chuse rather to conclude with enforcing my Suit to the former, that they would soberly and sadly weigh the account they must one Day give of the Employment of their Parts, and the more they have hitherto embeazled them, the more to endeavor to expiate that unthriftiness, by a more careful Managery for the future; that so instead of that vain, emty, vanishing Mirth they have courted here, they may find a real, full, and eternal Satisfaction in the Joy of their Lord.

SECT.



## S E C T. V I I I.

*Of Flattery.*

1. **T**H E last of Verbal injuries to our Neighbor which I shall mention, is Flattery. This is indeed the fattalest wound of the Tongue, carries least Smart but infinitely more of Danger, and is as much superior to the former, as a Gangrene is to a Gall or Scratch; this may be sore and vexing, but that stupefying and deadly. Flattery is such a Mystery, such a Riddle of iniquity, that its very softnesses are its cruellest rigor, its Balm corrodes, and (to comprize all in the Psalmists excellent Description) *its words are smother then oil, and yet be they very swords.* Psalm. 56. 21.

2. **B**UT besides the mischiefs of it to the Patient, 'tis the most dishonoring, the most vilifying thing to the Agent. I shall not need to empannel a Jury either of Moralists or Divines, every

ry mans own breast sufficiently instructing him in the unworthiness of it. 'Tis indeed a Collective accumulative Baseness, it being in its Elements a compound and a complex of the most sordid, hateful qualities incident to Mankind. I shall instance in three, *viz.* Lying, Servility, and Trechery, which being detestably deform'd single, must in Conjunction make up a loathsom Monstrous guilt. Now tho Flattery has two Branches, yet these lie so at the Root as equall to influence both: for whether you take it as it is the giving of praise where it is not due, or the professing of kindness which is not real, these Properties are still its Constitutive parts.

3. AND first we may take Lying to be the very corner Stone of the Fabric; for take it away, and the Whole falls to the ground. A Parasite would make but a lean trade of it, that should confine himself to truth. For tho 'tis possible so to order the manner and circumstances, as to flatter even in the representing a mans real vertues to him, yet commonly if they do not falsify as to the kind; they are forc'd to do it as to the degree. Besides as there are  
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but few such subjects of Flattery, so neither are men of that Worth so receptive of it. Such sort of addressees are less dangerous to those who have the perspicacity to see thro' them: so that these Merchants are under a necessity of dealing with the more ignorant Chapmen, and with them their counterfeit wares will go off best. It is indeed strange to consider, with what gross impudent falshoods men of this trade will court their Patrons. How many in former ages have not only amass'd together all sublunary excellences, but have even ransacked heaven to supply their Flattery, Deified their Princes, and perswaded them they were Gods, who at last found they were to die like men? And tho' this strein be now out-dated, yet perhaps 'tis not that the vice is grown more modest, but that Atheism has rob'd it of that Topic. Those that believe no God, would rather seem to annihilate than magnify the person to whom they should apply the title. But I do not find that the practice has any other bounds. A great mans vices shall still be called vertues; his deformities, beauties; and his most absurd follies, the height of ingenuity. Such a  
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subtil Alchymist is his Parasite, that he turns all he touches into gold, imaginariy indeed as to the deluded Person, but oft-times real to himself. Nor is Lying less naturall to the other part of Flattery, the Profession of service and kindness. This needs no evidencing, and to attempt it would be a self-Confutation: for if those Professions be true, they are not Flattery, therefore if they be Flattery, they must needs be Lies. It will be almost as needless to expatiate on the Baseness and meanness of that sin; for tho there is no Subject that affords more matter for Declamation, yet Lying is a thing that is ashamed of it self, and therefore may well be remitted to its own convictions. 'Tis *Aristotles* observation, that all Elements but the Earth, had some Philosopher or other, that gave it his vote to be the first productive Principle of all things: and I think we may now say, that all Crimes have had their Abettors and fautors, some body that would stand up in their defence; only Lying is so much the dregs and refuse of wickedness, that none has yet had Chymistry enough to sublimate it, to bring it into such a reputation, that any man

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will think fit to own it: the greater wonder that what is under so universal a reproch, should be so commonly admitted in practice. But by this we may make an estimate, what the whole body of Flattery is, when in one limb of it we find so much corruption.

4. A Second is Servility and Abjectness of humor: and of this there needs no other proof then has bin already given; this charge being implicitly involv'd in the former of Lying, the condescending to that, being a mark of a disingenuous spirit. And accordingly the nobler Heathens lookt on it as the vice of Slaves and vassals, below the liberty of a free man, as well as an honest. But tho I need no other evidence to make good the accusation, yet every Sycophant furnishes me with many supernumerary proofs. Look upon such a one, and you shall see his eies immoveably fixt on his Patrons face, watching each look, each glance, and in every change of his countenance (like a Star-gazer) reading his own destiny, his Ears chain'd (like gally-slaves at the oar) to his dictate, sucking in the most insipid discourses with as much greediness, as if they were the Apothegms of the



the seven fages, his Tongue tuned only to Panegyrics and acclamations, his feet in winged motion upon every nod or other signification of his plesure: in a word, his whole body ( as if had no other animal spirits then what it derived from him ) varies its postures, its exercises, as he finds agreeable to the humor he is to serve. And can humanity contrive to debase it self more? Yes it can, and do's to often, by enslaving its Diviner part to, taking up not only opinions, but even crimes also in compliance, playing the incarnate Devil, and helping to act those villanies which Satan can only suggest: and if this be not a state of abject slavery, sure there is none in the world. *Plutarch* tells us, that *Philoxenus* for despising some dull Poetry of *Dionysius*, was by him condemned to dig in the quarries: from whence being by the mediation of friends remanded, at his return *Dionysius* produced some other of his verses, which as soon as *Philoxenus* had read, he made no reply, but calling to the waiters, said, *Let them carry me again to the quarries.* And if a heathen Poet could prefer a corporeal slavery before a mental, what name of

reproch is low enough for those, who can submit to both, in pursuit of those poor sordid advantages they project by their Flatteries. Nor is this baseness more observable in these mean fawnings and observances, then it is in the protestations of kindness and Friendship. Love is the greatest gift any man has to bestow, and Friendship the sacredest of all moral bonds: and to prostitute these to little pitiful designs, is sure one of the basest cheats we can put upon our common nature, in thus debasing her purest and most current coin, which by these frequent adulterations is become so suspected, that scarce any man knows what he receives. But Christian Charity is yet worse used in the case: for that obliging to all sincerity, is hereby induced to give gold for dross, exhibite that *Love indeed, and in truth*, which is returned only *in word and in Tongue*, 1. Joh. 3. 18. And so it do's in those who observe its rules: but in those who own, yet observe them not, 'tis yet a greater sufferer, by laboring under the scandal of all their dissimulations. It was once the Character given Christians, even by their Enemies, *Behold*  
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*how they love one another:* but God knows we may now be pointed out by a very differing mark, *Behold how they deceive and delude one another.* And sure this violation we herein offer to our religion, do's not allay but aggravate the baseness of this practice: for if in the other we sell our selves, in this we sell our God too, sacrifice our interest in him to get a surreptitious title to the favor of a man. And this I conceive do's in the second place not much commend the art of Flattery, which is built up of so vile materials.

5. AND to compleat this infamous composition, in the third place Treachery comes in; a crime of so odious a kind, that to name it is to implead it: yet how intrinsic a part this is of Flattery, will need no great skill to evidence, daily experience sufficiently doing it. 'Tis a common observation of Flatterers, that they are like the Heliotrope, open only towards the sun, but shut and contract themselves at night, and in cloudy weather. Let the object of their adoration be but eclipsed, they can see none of those excellences which before dazled their eyes: and however inconstant they  
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may seem in it to others, they are indeed very constant to themselves, true to their fixt principle, of courting the greatness not the man; in pursuit whereof their old Idol is often made a sacrifice to their new: all malicious discovery is made of their falling friend, to buy an interest in the rising one. Of this there are such crouds of examples in Story, that it would be impertinent to single out any, especially in an age that is fitter to furnish presidents for the future, than to borrow of the past times. But supposing the Parasite not actually guilty of this base revolt (which yet he seldom fails to be upon occasion) yet is he no less Trecherous even in the height of his Blandishments; and while he most courts a man, he do's the most ruinously undermine him. For first he abuses him in his understanding, precludes him from that which wise men have judged the most essential part of Learning, the knowledge of himself, from which 'tis the main business of the Flatterer to divert him. And to this abuse there is another inevitably consequent: for this ignorance of his faults or follies, necessarily condemns him to the continuing in them, it being impossible

possible for him to think of correcting either the one or the other, who is made believe he has neither. This is like the treachery of a bribed officer in a Garrison, who will not let the weak parts be fortified, and laies the man as open to assaults as that doth the Town. Yet this is not all, he do's not only provide for the continuance, but the improving of his crimes and errors, which alas are too prolific of themselves, but being cultivated and manured with perpetual soothing and encouragements, grow immesurably luxuriant. And accordingly we see that men used only to applauses, are so swell'd with them, that their insolences are intolerable. And this they are sometimes taught to their cost, when they happen among free men, who will not submit to all they say, nor commend all they do. And finding these uneasy contradictions when they come abroad, they are willing to retire to their most complaisant company: and so this Sycophant Devil having once got them within his circle, may enchant them as he pleases, lead them from one wickedness to another. And as *Caligula* and other voluptuous Emperours, by being adored



as Gods, sunk in their sensuality below the Nature of man, so these celebrated Persons are by that false veneration animated to all those reprochful practices, which may expose them to a real contempt: their follies, as well as their vices still get head, till they answer the description the Wise man gives of the old Giants, *Who fell away in the strength of their foolishness.* Eccl. 16. 7.

6. AND sure he that betraies a man to all these mischiefs, may well be thought perfidious. But that which infinitely amplifies and enhances the Treachery is, that all this is acted under the notion and disguise of a friend; a relation so venerable, that methinks 'tis the nearest secular transcript of the treason, which is storied of those who have administred Poison in the Eucharist. The name of a friend is such an endearment, as nothing human can equal. All other natural or civil ties take their greatest force from this. What signifies an unfriendly Parent, or Brother, or Wife? 'Tis friendship only that is the cement which really and effectively combines mankind: and therefore we may observe, that God reckoning up other relations, illustrates them  
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by several notes of endearment, but when he comes to that of friendship, 'tis *the friend who is as thine own soul*, Deut. 13.6. nothing below the highest instance was thought expressive enough of that union. What a Legion of Fiends then possesseth men that can break these chains Mat. 5. 4. nay that can hammer and forge those very chains into Daggers and Stillettoes, and make their friendship an engine of ruine? This is certainly the blackest color wherein we can view a Parasite, his false light makes the shadow the more dismal. As the Ape has a peculiar deformity above other brutes by that aukward and ungraceful resemblance he has to a man, so sure a Flatterer is infinitely the more hateful for being the ugly counterfeit of a Friend. And as this Trechery lies at the bottom of the Panegyrics, so also do's it of all the caresses and exuberant kindness of a Flatterer, which if they aimed not at any particular end of circumvention, must yet in the general be trecherous by being false. A man looks on the love of his friend as one of the richest possessions (upon which account the Philosopher thought friends were to be Inventoried as well as goods.)

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What a defeat and discomfiture is it to a man when he comes to use this wealth, to find it all false metall, such as will not answer any of those purposes for which he depended on it. There cannot sure be a greater Trechery, then first to raise a confidence and then deceive it. But besides this fundamental falseness, there are also many incidental Trecheries, which fall in upon occasion of particular designs. A pretence of kindness is the universal stale to all base projects: by this men are rob'd of their fortunes, and women of their honor: in a word all the wolfish designs walk under this sheeps clothing; and as the world goes, men have more need to beware of those who call themselves friends, then those who own themselves enemies.

7. THESE are the lineaments of this vice of Flattery, which sure do together make up a face of most extreme deformity. I might upon a true account add another, and charge it with folly too. I am sure according to the Divine estimate it is alwaies so: and truly it do's not seldom prove so in the secular also. Men of this art do somtimes drop their vizard before they have got the prize,  
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and then there is nothing in the world that appears so contemptible, so silly; a barefaced Flatterer being every bodies scorn. The short is, wherever this game is plaied there is alwaies a fool in the case: if the parasite be detected, it falls to his share: if he be not, to his whom he deludes. But at the best 'tis but subtilty and cunning he can boast of; and if he can in his own fancy raise that to the opinion of true Wisdom, 'tis a sign he is come round to practice his deceits upon himself, and is as much his own Flatterer as he has bin others.

8. AND now I know not whether it be more shame or wonder, to see that men can so put off ingenuity, and the native greatness of their kind, as to descend to so base, so ignoble a vice: yet alas we daily see it don, and that not only by the scum and refuse of the people, such as *Job* speaks of, *who are viler then the earth*, Cap. 30. 8. but by Persons of all conditions. Flattery like a spring forc'd upwards ascends, as cares are by the wise man said to descend, *Ecclus. 40. 4. from him that weareth a linen frock to him that weareth a crown*: all intermedial degrees are but like pipes, which as they

suck from below, so transmit it still upwards. There are few so low but find some body to cajole and flatter them. Some interest or other may sometimes be to be served even upon the meanest, and those that find themselves thus solicited for benefits, are easily taught by it how to address to their immediate superiors, from whom they expect greater: and as 'tis thus handed from one rank to another, the art still is more subtilized and refined ( God help poor Princes the while, who commonly meet with the Elixir, and quintessence of this venem: ) and thus it passes thro all states and conditions; as they are passive on the one side, and are flattered by some, so they are active on the other, and flatter others.

9. I say all conditions, I do not say all Persons in those conditions, for no truly generous soul can stoop so low: but 'tis too evident to what a low ebb Generosity as well as Christianity is grown, by the numbers of those who thus degrade themselves, every little petty interest being thought worth these base submissions. And truly it is hard to find, by what Topic of perswasion to assault such men. The meanness, or the sin will scarce be dissuaves



fives to those who have reconciled themselves to both: if any thing can be pertinently said to them, it must be upon the score of Interest, for that being their grand principle, they can with no pretence disclame the inferences drawn thence.

10. LET them therefore duly balance the advantages they project from this practice with the mischiefs and dangers of it. What they expect is commonly either Honor or wealth, these they hope may be acquired by their prostrations to those, who can dispense or procure them. 'Tis true, as Honor signifies Greatness and power, it is sometimes attain'd by it, but then as it signifies Reputation and esteem, 'tis as sure to be lost. He that thus ascends, may be lookt on with fear, but never with reverence. Now I think 'tis no good bargain to exchange this second notion of Honor for the first: for besides the difference in the intrinsic value, 'tis to be consider'd how tottering a Pinnacle unmerited Greatness is. He that rais'd him to satisfy his humor at one time, can (with more ease and equal justice) throw him down at another: and when such a mando's fall,  
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he falls as without pity, so without remedy, has no foundation on which to rebuild his fortune. His Sycophanting arts being detected, that Game is not to be plaid the second time: whereas a man of a clear reputation, tho his barque be split, yet he saves his Cargo, has something left towards setting up again, and so is in capacity of receiving benefit not only from his own industry, but the friendship of others. A sound piece of Timber, if it be not thought fit for one use, yet will be laid by for another: and an honest man will probably at one time or other be thought good for something.

II. As for the other aim, that of Wealth, 'tis very possible that may sometimes be compassed; and well it may, the flatterer, having several Springs to feed it by. For he that has a great Patron, has the advantage of his countenance and Authority, he has that of his bounty and liberality, and he has another (sometimes greater then both) that of his negligence and deceivableness. But yet all these acquisitions are many times like Fairy money, what is brought one night is taken away the next. Men of this mold seldom

dom know how to bear prosperity temperately, and it is no new thing to see a Privado carry it so high, as to awaken the jealousy of his promoter, which being assisted by the busy industry of those who envy his fortune, 'twill be easy enough to find some flaw in his Gettings, by which to unravel the whole Web: an event that has bin oft experimented not only in the private managery of Families, but in the most public administrations. And these are such hazards, that laid all together would much recommend to any the Moral of *Horaces* Fable, and make one chuse the Country Mouses plain fare and safety, rather then the delicacies of the City with so much danger. This then is the state of the prosperous Parasite: but alas how many are there who never arrive to this, but are kickt down ere they have climb'd the two or three first rounds of the Ladder, whose designs are so humble, as not to aspire above a Major-Domo, or some such domestic preferment, (for in this trade there are adventurers of all sizes. ) But upon all these considerations, methinks it appears no very inviting one to any. At the long  
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run an honest freedom of speech will more recommend a man, then all these sneaking flatteries: we have a very wise mans word for it: *he that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favor, then he that flattereth with his lips.* Pro. 28. 23.

12. BUT after all that hath or can be said, the suppression of Flattery will most depend upon those Persons to whom it is addrest: if it be not repuls'd there, nothing else will discourage it; and if it be, 'tis crusht in the egg, and can produce no viper. These Vulturs prey only on carcasses, on such stupid minds, as have not life and vigor enough to fray them away. Let but Persons of quality entertain such customers with a severe brow, with some smart expression of dislike, those Leeches will immediatly fall off. In *Sparta* when all laws against theft prov'd ineffectual, at last they fixt the penalty on them that were rob'd, and by that did the business: and in the present case, if 'twere made as infamous to be flatter'd as 'tis to flatter, I believe it might have the like effect. Indeed there is pretence enough to make it so: for first as to Wit, the advantage is clear on the Flatterers side

sider: he must be allowed to have more of that (which in this age is more than a counterpoise to honesty; ) and as for vertue, the balance (as to the principal motive) seems to hang pretty even: 'tis the vice of Avarice that tempts the one to flatter, and the vice of Pride that makes it acceptable to the other. The truth is, there is the bottom of the matter: 'tis that secret confederate within, that exposes men to those assaults from without. We have generally such an appetite to praise, that we greedily suck it in without staying to examine whether it belong to us or no, or whether it be design'd as a kindness or an abuse. Other injuries rush upon us with violence, and give us notice of their approach: they may be said to come *like water into our bowels; but this like oil into our bones* Psa. 109. 18. penetrates easily, undiscernibly, by help of that native propension we have to receive it. 'Tis therefore the near concern of all, especially of those whose quality most exposes them, to keep a guard upon that trecherous inmate, not to let that step into the scale to make a base Sy-cophant out-weigh a true friend, and when ever they are attacqued with ex-



travagant Encomiums, let them fortify themselves with this Dilemma, Either they have those excellences they are praised for, or they have not: if they have not, 'tis an apparent cheat and gull, and he is of a pittiful forlorn understanding that delights to be fool'd; but if they have, they are too good to be exposed to such worms who will instantly wither the fairest gourd, Jon. 4. 7.

For as it is said of the *Grand Signior*, that no grass growes where his horse once treads: so we may say of the Flatterer, no vertue ever prospers where he is admitted: if he find any he hugs it till he stifles it, if he find none, he so indisposes the soil, that no future seeds can ever take root. In fine, he is a mischief beyond the description of any Character. O let not men then act this Part to themselves by being their own parasites! and than'twill be an easy thing to escape all others.

SECT.

## SECT. IX.

*Of Boasting.*

1. **W**E have now seen some effects of an ungovern'd Tongue, as they relate to God and our Neighbor. There is yet a third sort which reflect upon a mans self. So unboundedly mischievous is that petulant member, that heaven and earth are not wide enough for its range, but it will find work at home too; and like the viper, that after it had devoured its companions, prei'd upon its self, so it corrodes inward, and becomes often as fatal to its owner, as to all the world besides.

2. **O**F this there are as many instances, as there are imprudent things said, for all such have the worst reflection upon the speaker: and therefore all that have given rules for civil life, have in order to it put very severe restraints upon the Tongue, that it run not before the judgment. 'Twas the advice of

*Zeno* to *dip the Tongue in the mind* before one should permit it to speak. *Theophrastus* used to say, *It was safer trusting to an unbridled horse, than to intemperate speech.* And daily experience confirms the Aphorism; for those that set no guard upon their Tongues, are hurried by them into a thousand indecences, and very often into reall considerable mischiefs. By this means men have proved their own delators, discovered their own most important secrets: and whereas their heart should have kept a lock upon their Tongue, they have given their Tongue the key of their heart, and the event has bin oft as unhappy as the proceeding was preposterous. There are indeed so many waies for men to lose themselves in their talk, that I should do the like if I should pretend to trace them. Besides my subject leads me not to discourse Ethically, but Christianly of the faults of the Tongue, and therefore I have all a long considered the one no farther then it happens to be twisted with the other.

3. IN the present case I shall insist only upon one fault of the Tongue, which partakes of both kinds, and it is at once

a vice and a folly, I mean that of Boasting and vaunting a mans self: a strain to which some mens tongues have a wonderful glibness. No discourse can be administred, but they will try to turn the Tide, and draw it all into their own Chancel, by entertaining you with long stories of themselves: or if there be no room for that, they will at least screw in here and there some intimations of what they did or said. Yea so stupid a vanity is this, that it works alike upon all materials: not only their greater and more illustrious acts or sentences, but even their most slight and trivial occurrences, by being theirs, they think acquire a considerableness, and are forcibly imposed upon the company; the very dreams of such people strait commence prophesy, and are as seriously related, as if they were undoubted revelations. And sure if we reflect upon our Saviors rule, that *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, we cannot but think these men are very full of themselves; and to be so, is but another phrase for being very Proud. So 'tis Pride in the heart, which is the spring that feeds this perpetual current at the mouth, and under that notion we are to consider it.

4. AND truly there is nothing can render it more infamous, Pride being a vice that of all others is the most branded in Scripture as most detestable to God, and is signalized by the punishment to be so. This turned *Lucifer* out of Heaven, *Nebuchadnezzar* out of his Throne, nay out of Human society. And indeed it seems still to have something of the same effect, nothing rendring a man so inconsiderable; for it sets him above the meaner sort of company, and makes him intolerable to the better, and to complete the parallel, he seldom comes to know himself till he be turn'd a grazing, be reduced to some extremities.

5. BUT this Boasting arrogant humor, tho' alwaies bad, yet is more or less so according to the Subject on which it works. If it be only on Natural excellences, as Beauty, Wit; or accidental acquisitions, as Honor, Wealth, or the like, yet even there 'tis not only a Theft, but a Sacriledg; the glory of those being due only to the Donor, not to the receiver, there being not so much as any predisposition in the subject to determine Gods bounty. He could have made the most deformed Beggar as handsom  
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and as rich, as those who most pride themselves in their wealth and beauty. No man fancies himself to be his own Creator, and tho som have assumed to be the Architects of their own fortunes, yet the frequent defeats of mens industry and contrivance, do sufficiently confute that bold pretence, and evince, that there is something above them, which can either blast or prosper their attempts. What an invasion then is it of Gods right, to ingross the honor of those things being don, which were not at all in their power to do? And sure the folly is as great in respect of men, as the sin is towards God. This boasting like a heavy Nurse, overlaies the Child: the vanity of that quite drowns the notice of the things in which 'tis founded; and men are not so apt to say, such a man is Handsom, Wise, or Great, as that he is proud upon the fancy of being so. In a word he that celebrates his own excellences, must be content with his own applauses, for he will get none of others, unless it be from those fawning Sycophants; whose praises are worse then bitterest Detraction.

6. AND yet so sottish a vice is Pride,  
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that it can make even those insidious Flatteries matter of boast, which is a much more irrational object of it then the former. How eagerly do some men propagate every little Encomium their Parasites make of them? With what gust and sensuality will they tell how such a Jest of theirs took, or such a Magnificence was admired? 'Tis pleasant to see what little Arts and dexterities they have to wind in such things into discourse: when alas it amounts to no more then this, that some have thought them fools enough to be flatter'd, and 'tis odds but the hearers will think them enough so to be laught at.

7. BUT there is yet another Subject of Boasting more foolish, and more criminal too then either of the former, and that is when men vaunt of their Piety, which if it were true, were yet less owing to themselves then any natural endowment. For tho we do not at all assist towards them, yet do we neither obstruct; but in the operations of Grace 'tis otherwise; we have there a principle of opposition, and God never makes us his own till he subdue that: and tho he do it, not by an irresistible force, but by  
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such sweet and gentle insinuations, that we are sometimes captivated ere we are aware : yet that do's not impeach his right of conquest, but only shews him the more gracious conqueror. 'Tis true in respect of the event we have great cause of exultance and joy, Gods service being the most perfect freedom : yet in regard of the efficiency, we have as little matter of Boast, as the surprized City has in the triumphs of its victor.

8. B u t secondly either this vaunted Piety is not reall, and then 'tis good for nothing, or else by being vaunted becomes so. If it be not real, 'tis then the superadding Hypocrisy to the former sacriledg, an attempt at once to rob God and cheat men, and in the event usually renders them hateful to both; to God ( who cannot be mocked ) it do's so at the instant, and seldom misses to do so at last to men. An Hypocrite has a long part to act, and if his memory fail him but in any one scene, his play is spoiled: so that his hazards are so great, that 'tis as little prudent as 'tis honest to set up the trade, especially in an age when Piety it self is at so low a price, that its counterfeit cannot pass for much. But if the

Piety be indeed true, the Boasting it blasts it, makes it utterly insignificant. This we are told by *Christ* himself, who assures us, that even the most Christian actions of praier, almes, and fasting, must expect no other reward (when boasted) then the sought-for applause of men. Mat. 6. When a man shall make his own tongue the trumpet of his Alms, or the echo of his Praiers, he carves, or rather snatches his own reward, and must not look God should heap more upon him: the recompence of his pride he may indeed look for from him, but that of his vertue he has forestall'd. In short, piety is like those lamps of old, which maintain'd their light some Ages underground, but as soon as they took air expired. And surely there cannot be a more deplorable folly, then thus to lose a rich Jewel: only for the pitiful plesure of shewing it: its the humor of Children and Idiots, who must be handling their birds till they fly away, and it ranks us with them in point of discretion, tho not of innocence.

9. FROM the view of these particulars we may in the gross conclude that this ostentation is a most foolish sin, such  
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as never brought in advantage to any man. There is no vice so undermines it self as this do's: 'tis glory it seeks, and instead of gaining that, it loses common ordinary estimation. Every body that sees a bladder puffed up, knows 'tis but wind that so swells it: and there is no surer argument of a light frothy brain then this bubbling at the mouth. Indeed there is nothing renders any man so contemptible, so utterly useles to the world: it excludes him almost from all commerce, makes him incapable of receiving or doing a benefit. No man will do him a good turn because he foresees he will arrogate it to himself, as the effect of his merit: and none (that are not in some great exigence) will receive one from him, as knowing it shall be not only proclaimed, but magnified much above the true worth. There seems to be but one purpose for which he serves, and that is to be sport for his company: and that he seldom fails to be, for in these gamesome daies men will not lose such an opportunity of divertisement, and therefore will purposely give him hints, which may put him upon his Rhodomontades I do not speak this by way of encourage-



ment to them , but only to shew these vaporers , to what scorn they expose themselves , and what advantage they give to any that have a mind to abuse them : for they need not be at any pains for it , they do but swim with their stream ; an approving nod or smile serves to drive on the design , and make them display themselves more disadvantageously , more ridiculously , then the most Satyri- cal Character could possibly do.

10. B U T besides these sportive projects , such a man laies himself open to more dangerous circumventions. He that shews himself so enamour'd of praise , that ( *Narcissus* like ) dotes on his own reflections , is a fit prey for Flatterers , and such a Carcase will never want those Eagles : when his weak part is once discern'd ( as it must soon be when himself publishes it ) he shall quickly be surrounded with assailants. The last Section has shewed the misery of a man so besieged , therefore I shall not enlarge on it here , this mention being only intended to evince how apt this vain glorious humor is to betray men to it.

11. T H E S E are competent Specimens of the folly of this vice ; but it has yet  
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a farther aggravation; that it precludes all means of growing wiser: 'tis *Salomons* assertion, *Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a Fool then of him*, Pro. 26. 12. And the reason is evident, for he discards the two grand instruments of instruction, Admonition and Observation. The former he thinks superseded by his own Perfections, and therefore when any such friendly office is attempted towards him, he imputes it either to Envy, and a desire to eclipse his lustre by finding some spot, or else to Ignorance and incapacity of estimating his worth: the one he entertains with Indignation, the other with disdainful Pity. As for Observation, he so circumscribes it within himself, that it can never fetch in any thing from without. Reading of men has bin by some thought the most facile and expedite Method for acquiring Knowledg; and sure for some kinds of Knowledg it is: but then a man must not only read one Author, much less the one worst he can pick out for himself. 'Tis an old true saying, He that is his own Pupil shall have a Fool for his Tutor: and truly he that studies only himself, will be like to make  
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but a sorry Progress. Yet this is the case of arrogant men, they lose all the benefit of Conversation, and when they should be enriching their Minds with foreign treasure, they are only counting over their own store. Instead of advertising to those sober discourses which they hear from others, they are perhaps watching to interrupt them by some pompous Story of themselves, or at least in the abundance of their self-sufficiency, think they can say much better things, Magisterially obtrude their own notions, and fall a teaching when 'tis fitter they should learn: and sure to be thus forward to lay out, and take no care to bring in, must needs end in a Bankrupt state. 'Tis true I confess the study of a mans-self is (rightly taken) the most useful part of Learning, but then it must be such a Study as brings him to know himself, which none do so little as these men, who in this are like those silly women the Apostle describes, 2. Tim. 3. 7. *Who are ever learning yet never attain.* And 'tis no wonder, for they begin at the wrong end, make no inquiry into their faults or defects, but fix their Contemplation only on their  
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more splendid qualities, with which they are so dazled, that when you bring them to the darker parts of themselves, it fares with them as with those that come newly from gazing on the Sun, they can see nothing.

12. AND now having dissected this swelling vice, and seen what it is that feeds the tumor, the cure suggests it self. If the disease be founded in Pride, the abating that is the most natural and proper remedy: and truly one would think that mere weighing of the foregoing considerations, might prove sufficient allays to it. Yet because where humors are turgent, 'tis necessary not only to purge them, but also to strengthen the infested parts, I shall adventure to give some few advices by way of Fortification and Antidote.

13. IN the first place, that of the Apostle offers it self to my hand, *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others,* Phil. 2. 4. A counsil which in a distorted sense seems to be too much practiced. We are apt to apply it to worldly advantages, and in that notion not to look on our own things with thankfulness, but on other  
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ther mens with envy. We apply it also to errors and fins , and look not on our own to correct and reform , but on others to despise and censure. Let us at last take it in the genuine sense , and not look on our own excellencies , but those of others. We see in all things how desuetude do's contract and narrow our faculties , so that we can apprehend only those things wherein we are conversant. The droiling Pefant scarce thinks there is any world beyond his own Village , or the neighboring Markets , nor any gaity beyond that of a Wake or Morrice ; and men who are accustom'd only to the admiration of themselves , think there is nothing beside them worthy of regard. These unbred minds must be a little sent abroad , made acquainted with those excellencies which God has bestowed on other men , and then they will not think themselves like *Gideons* fleece to have suckt up all the dew of heaven : nay perhaps , they may find they rather answer the other part of the miracle ; and are drier then their neighbors. Let them therefore put themselves in this course , observe diligently all the good that is visible in other men :

and



and when they find themselves mounting into their altitudes, let them clog their wings with the remembrance of those who have out-soar'd them, not in vain opinion, but in true worth. 'Tis nothing but the fancy of singularity that puffs us up. To breath, to walk, to hear, to see, are excellent powers, yet no body is proud of them, because they are common to the whole kind: and therefore if we would observe the great number of those that equal, or exceed us, even in the more appropriate endowments, we should not put so excessive a price upon our selves.

14. SECONDLY if we will needs be reflecting upon our selves, let us do it more ingeniously, more equally, let us take a true survey, and observe as well the barren as the fertil part of the soil: and if this were don, many mens value would be much short of what they are willing to suppose it. Did we but compare our crop of Weeds and Nettles, with that of our Corn, we must either think our ground is poor, or our selves every ill husbands. When therefore the recollection of either real or fancied worth begins to make us aëry, let us condense again

by the remembrance of our sins and folly : 'tis the only possible service they can do us , and considering how dear they are to cost us , we had not need lose this one accidental advantage. In this sense *Satan may cast out Satan* , our vilest guilts help to eject our pride ; and did we well manage this one stratagem against him , 'twould give us more cause of triumph , then most of those things for which we so spread our plumes : I do not say we should contract new guilts to make us humble , God knows we need not , we have all of us enough of the old stock if we would but thus employ them.

15. IN the last place I should advise those who are apt to talk big things of themselves , to turn into some other road of discourse : for if they are their own Theme , their tongues will as naturally turn into Eulogies , as a horse do's into that Inn to which he is customed. All habits do require some little excess of the contrary to their cure : for we have not so just a scantling of our selves , as to know to a grain what will level the scales , and place us in the right Mediocrity. Let men therefore that have this infirmity

infirmity, shun (as far as prudence and interest permits) all discourse of themselves, till they can sever it from that unhappy appendage. They will not be at all the less acceptable company, it being generally thought none of the best parts of breeding, to talk much of ones self: for tho it be don so as not to argue pride yet it do's ignorance of more worthy subjects.

16. I should here conclude this Section, but that there is another sort of vaunting Talk, which was not well reducible to any of the former Heads, the Subject matter being vastly distant: for in those the Boasting was founded in some either real or supposed worth, but in this in Baseness and villany. There are a Generation of men, who have removed all the Land-marks which their Fathers (nay even the Father of Spirits) have set, reverse the common notions of Humanity, and call evil good, and good evil, and those things which a moderate impudence would blush to be surpris'd in, they not only proclame but boast off, blow the Trumpet as much before their crimes, as others before their good deeds. Nay so much do they affect this

inverted sort of Hypocrisy, that they own more wickedness than they act, assume to have made Practical the highest Speculations of villany, and like the Devils Knights errant, pretend to those Romantic atchievements, which the veriest Fiend incarnate could never compass. These are such Prodigies, such Monsters of villany, that tho they are the objects of Grief and Wonder, they are not of Counsil. Men who thus rave, we may conclude their brains are turned, and one may as well read Lectures at Bedlam as treat with such. Yet we know that these sharp corrections recover crazed men to Sobriety; and then their Cure lies only in the hand of Civil Justice: if that would take them at their words, receive their brags as Confessions, and punish them accordingly, it may be a little real smart would correct this mad Itch, and teach them not *to glory in their shame.* Phil. 3. 19.

IN the mean time let others who are not yet arrived to this height, consider betimes, that all indulgent practice of sin is the direct Road to it, and according to the degrees of that indulgence, they make more or less hast. He  
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that constantly and habitually indulges, rides upon the Spur, and will quickly overtake his Leaders. Nay if it be but this one vice of vanity, it may finally bring him to their states. He that loves to brag, will scarce find exercise enough for that faculty in his vertues, and therefore may at last be tempted to take in his vices also. But that which is more seriously considerable is, that Pride is so provoking to Almighty God, that it often causes him to withdraw his *Grace*, which is a Donative he has promised only *to the humble*. Jam. 4. 6. And indeed when we turn that Grace into wantonness, as the Proud man do's who is pamper'd by it into high conceits of himself, 'tis not probable God will any longer prostitute his favors to such abuse. The Apostle observes it of the Gentiles, who had in contradiction of their natural light abandon'd themselves to vile Idolatries, that God *after gave them up to a reprobate mind and vile affections*. Rom. 1. 25. 26. But the Proud now stifle a much clearer light, and give up themselves to as base an Idolatry, the adoration of themselves. And therefore 'tis but equal to expect God should desert them, and (as some Nati-  
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ons have Deified their diseases ) permit them to celebrate even their fowlest enormities. The application of all I shall sum up in the words of the Apostle. Rom. 11. 21. *Take heed also that he spare not thee.*

## S E C T. X.

*Of Querulousness.*

I. **T**O this of Boasting may not unfitly be subjoin'd another inordinancy of the Tongue, viz. murmuring and complaining. For tho' these faults seem to differ as much in their complexions, as Sanguine do's from Melancholy, yet there is nothing more frequent then to see them united in the same Person. Nor is this a conjunction of a later date, but is as old as St. Jude's daies, who observes that the *murmurers* and *complainers* are the very same with those who speak *great swelling words*, Jude 16.

2. **N**OR are we to wonder to find them thus conjoined, if we consider what an original cognation and kindred they have

have, they being (however they seem divided) streams issuing from the same fountain. For the very same Pride which prompts a man to vaunt and overvalue what he is, do's as forcibly incline him to contemn and disvalue what he has; whilst measuring his enjoiments by that vast Idea he has form'd of himself, 'tis impossible but he must think them below him.

3. THIS indeed is the true original of those perpetual complainings we hear from all sorts and conditions of men. For let us pass thro all Degrees, all Ages, we shall rarely find a single Person, much less any member of men, exempt from this Querulous, this fullen humor: as if that breath of life where-with God originally inspired us, had bin given us not to magnify his Bounty, but to accuse his illiberality, and like the dismaller sort of instruments, could be tuned to no other Streins but those of Mourning and Lamentation. Every man contributes his note to this doleful Harmony, and after all that God has don to oblige and delight mankind, scarce any man is satisfied enough, I will not say to be thankfull, but to be patient. For alas  
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what Tragical complaints do men make of their infelicity, when perhaps their prosperity is as much the envious outcry of others ? Every little defeat of a design, of an appetite, every little disregard from those above them, or less solemn observance from those below them, makes their *Heart hot within them*, Psal. 39. 3. and the tongue (that combustible part) quickly takes fire and *breaks out* into extravagant exclamations. It is indeed strange to see how weighty every the triviallest thing is when a passion is cast into the scale with it, how every the slightest inconvenience or petty want preponderates hundreds of great substantial blessings: when indeed were it in an instance never so considerable, it could be no just Counterpoise. Yet so closely is this corruption interwoven with our constitution, that it has sometimes prevail'd even upon good men. *Jacob* tho he had twelve sons, yet upon the supposed death of one despis'd the comforts of all the rest, and with an obstinate sorrow resolves to go *mourning to his Grave*. Gen. 35. 37. *David* after that signal victory which had preserv'd his life, reinstated him in his Throne, and restor'd

restor'd him to the Ark and Sanctuary, yet suffer'd the loss of his rebellious son, who was the Author of his danger, to overwhelm the sense of his deliverance, and instead of Hymns and praises, breaks out into ejulations and effeminate wailings, 2 Sam. 18. 33.

4. BUT God knows the most of our complaints cannot pretend to such considerable motives: they are not the bowels of a Father, the impresses of Nature that excite our repinings, but the impulses of our lusts and inordinate appetites. Our discontents are usually such as *Ahab's* for his neighbors vineyard, *Haman's* for *Mardecai's* obeisance, *Achitophel's* for having his counsil rejected. Every disappointment of our avarice, ambition, and pride, fill's our hearts with bitterness and our mouths with clamors. For if we should examine the numerous complaints which sound in every corner, it would doubtless be found that the greatest part of them have some such original: and that, whether the pretended grievances be public or private. For the first: many a man is a state male-content, merely because he sees another advanced to that honor or wealth which

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he thinks he has better deserv'd. He is alwaies inveighing against such unequal distributions, where the best services (such you may be sure his own are) are the worst rewarded: nor do's he ever cease to predict public ruines, till his private are repared. But as soon as that is don, his Augury grows more mild: and as if the estate and he were like *Hippocrates's* twins, his recruits give new vigor to that, and till his next suit is denied, every thing is well administred. So full alas men are of themselves, that 'tis hard to find any the most splendid pretences which have not something of that at the bottom: and would every man ransack his own heart, and resolve not to cast a stone till he had first cleer'd it of all sinister respects, perhaps the number of our complainers would be much abated.

5. N O R is it otherwise in private discontents. Men are apt to think themselves ill used by any man who will not serve their interest or their humor, nay sometimes their vices; and are prone in all companies to arraign such an unpliant Person, as if he were an enemy to mankind, because he is not a slave to their will. How many have quarrel'd e-

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ven with their dearest friends, because they would not assist them to their own ruine, or have striven to divert them from it: so forcible are our propensions to mutiny, that we equally take occasions from benefits or injuries.

6. BUT the highest and most unhappy instance of all is in our behavior towards God, whose allotments we dispute with the same or rather greater boldness than we do those of men. What else mean those impatient murmurs at those things which are the immediate issues of his Providence? Such are our native blemishes, diseases, death of friends, and the like. Nay what indeed are our displeasures even at those things which we pretend to fasten upon Second Causes? For those being all under the subordination of the first, cannot move but by its permission. This holy *Job* well discern'd and therefore do's not indite the *Chaldeans* or *Sabeans* for his plunder, but knowing they were but instruments, he submissly acknowledges, that there was a higher agent in his loss, *The Lord hath taken away*, Job. I. 21. When therefore we ravingly execrate the rapine of one man, the deceit of another for our impoverish-

ment, when we angrily charge our defamation on the malice of our maligners, our disappointments on the treachery or negligence of our friends, we do interpretatively conclude either that there is no over-ruling providence which could have restrained those events, or else (which is equally horrid) we accuse it as not having don well in permitting them. So that against whomsoever we direct our clamors, their last rebound is against Heaven; this Querulous humor carrying alwaies an implicate repugnance to Gods disposals: but where it is indulged to, it usually is its own expositor, and explicitly avows it, charges God foolishly, and by impious murmurs blasphemes that power which it cannot resist. Indeed the progress is very natural for our impatiences at men to swell into mutinies against God: for when the mind is once imbitter'd, it distinguishes not of objects, but indifferently lets fly its venem. *He that frets himself*, the Prophet tells us, *will curse his King, nay his God*, Isa. 8. 21. and he that quarrels at Gods distributions, is in the direct road to defie his Being.

7. B x this we may estimate the danger

ger of our discontents , which tho at first they are introduced by the inordinate love of our selves , yet are very apt to terminate in hatred and Blasphemies against God. He therefore that would secure himself from the highest degree , must watch against the lowest ; as he that would prevent a total Inundation , must avert the smallest breach in his Banks. Not but that even the first beginnings are in themselves well worth our guarding : for abstracting from all the danger of this enormous increase , these murmurings ( like a mortiferous Herb ) are poisonous even in their first Spring , before they arrive to their full maturity. To be alwaies moralizing the Fable of *Prometheus* upon one's self , playing the Vultur upon one's own entrails , is no desirable thing , tho we were accountable to none but our selves for it : to dip our tongues in gall , to have nothing in our mouth but the extract , and exhalation of our inward bitterness , is sure no great Sensuality. So that did we consult only our own ease , we might from that single Topic draw arguments enough against our mutinies.

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8. B u T besides our duty and ease, our credit and reputation make their plea also. Fortitude is one of the noblest of moral vertues, and has the luck to appear considerable even to those who despise all the rest. Now one of the most proper and eminent acts of that is, the bearing adverse events with an evenness of temper. This passive valour is as much the mark of a great mind as the active, nay perhaps more, the later being often owing to the Animal, this to the Rational part of man. And sure we must strangely have corrupted the principles of *Morality* as well as *Religion*, if every turbulent unruly Spirit, that fills the world with blood and rapine, shall have his ferity called gallantry; yet that sober courage, that maintains itself against all the shocks of Fortune, that keeps its Post in spite of the rudest encounters, shall not be allowed at least as good a name. And then on the contrary we may conclude, that to sink under every cross accident, to be still whining and complaining, crying out upon every touch, is a note of a mean degenerate soul, below the dignity of our reasonable nature. For certainly God never gave

us reason for so unkind a purpose, as only to quicken and enhance the resentment of our sufferings, but rather to controule those disorders, which the more tumultuous part of us, our senses, are apt to raise in us: and we are so far men and no farther, as we use it to that end. Therefore if the dictates of religion cannot restrain our murmurs, if we are not Christians enough to submit to the divine precepts of meekness and acquiescence: yet let us at least keep within those bounds which ingenious nature has set us, and not by our unmanly impatiencies enter common with Brutes and Animals.

9. NAY I may farther add, if neither for Gods nor our own sakes, yet for others, for humane societies sake, this querulous inclination should be suppress'd; there being nothing that renders a man more unpleasant, more uneasy company. For (besides that 'tis very apt to vent it self upon those with whom he converses, rendering him capricious and exceptionous; and 'tis a harsh, a grating sound to hear a man alwaies in the complaining Key) no man would willingly dwell within the noise of shrieks and



and groans; and the exclamations of the discontented differ from those only by being more articulate. It is a very unwelcome importunity, to entertain a mans company with remonstrances of his own infelicities and misadventures, and he that will relate all his grievances to others, will quickly make himself one to them. For tho he that is full of the inward sense of them, thinks it rather an ease then oppression to speak them out, yet the case is far otherwise with his Auditors: they are perhaps as much taken up with themselves; as he is, and is little at leisure to consider his concerns, as he theirs. Alas we are not now in those primitive daies, when there was as it were one common sense among Christians, when *if one member suffer'd, all the members suffer'd with it.* 1 Cor. 12. 26. That Charity which gave that sympathetic motion to the whole, is now it self benum'd, flows rarely beyond the narrow compass of our personal interest; and therefore we cannot expect that men should be very patient of our complaints who are not concern'd in the causes of them. The Priests answer to *Judas* do's speak the sense of most men  
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in the case *What is that to us? See thou to that.* Mat. 27. 4. I do not deny but that the discharging ones griefs into the bosome of a true friend, is both innocent and prudent: nay indeed he that has such a treasure, is unkind to himself if he use it not. But that which I would dissuade, is the promiscuous use of this liberty in common Conversation, the satisfying our Spleen, when we cannot ease our hearts by it, the loud declamings at our misery, which is seldom sever'd from as severe reflections on those whom we suppose the causes of it; by which nothing can be acquired but the opinion of our Impatience, or perhaps some new grievance from some, who think themselves concern'd to vindicate those whom we asperse. In a word 'tis as indecent as it is unacceptable, and we may observe all men are willing to flink out of such company, the Sober for the hazards, and Jovial for the unpleasantness. So that the murmurer seems to be turn'd off to the company of those doleful Creatures which the Prophet mentions, which were *to inhabite the ruines of Babylon*, 13. 21. For he is ill Conversation to all men, tho the worst of all to himself.

10. AND now upon the force of all these considerations, I may reasonably impress the Wise mans Counsil, *Therefore beware of murmuring*, Wisd. 1. 11. And indeed it is not the precept of the Wise-man alone, but of all who have made any just pretence to that title. For when we consider those excellent lectures of contentation and acquiescence, where-with the writings of Philosophers abound, 'tis hard to say whether they speak more of instruction or reproch to us. When their confused notions of a Deity had given them such impressions of his Wisdom and goodness, that they would not pretend to make any elections for themselves: how do's it shame our more explicite knowledg, who dare not depend on him in the smallest instance? who will not take his disposalls for good, unless our senses become his sureties? which amounts but to that degree of credit, which the most faithless man may expect from us, the trusting him as far as we see him. This is such a contumely to him, as the Ethnic world durst not offer him, and is the peculiar insolence of us degenerated Christians, who sure cannot be thought in earnest  
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when we talk of singing *Hallelujahs* in the next world to him, whilst we entertain him here only with the fullen noise of murmurs and repinings. For we are not to think that Heaven will Metamorphose us on a sudden, and turn our exclamations and wild clamors into Lauds and Magnificats. It do's indeed perfect and crown those graces which were here inchoate and begun, but no mans conversion ever succeeded his being there: for Christ has expresly told us, *That except we be converted, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*: if we go hence in our froward discontents, they will associate us with those, with whom is *Weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

## S E C T. XI.

*Of Positiveness.*

I. **A**NOTHER very unhandfom circumstance in discourse is the Being over confident and peremtory, a thing which do's very much unfit men for conversation, it being lookt on as the common birth-right of mankind, that every man is to opine according to the dictates of his own understanding, not anothers. Now this Peremtorness is of two sorts, the one a Magisterialness in matters of opinion and speculation, the other a Positiveness in relating matters of fact: in the one we impose upon mens understandings, in the other on their faith.

2. FOR the first, he must be much a stranger in the world who has not met with it: there being a generation of men, who as the Prophet speaks, *Are wise in their own eies, and prudent in their own sight*: Isa. 5. 21. Nay not only so, but who  
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make themselves the standards of wisdom, to which all are bound to conform, and whoever weighs not in their balance, be his reasons never so weighty, they write *Tekel* upon them. This is one of the most oppressive Monopolies imaginable: all others can concern only something without us, but this fastens upon our nature, yea and the better part of it too, our reason; and if it meet with those who have any considerable share of that within them, they will often be tempted to rally it, and not too tamely resign this native liberty. Reason submits only to Reason, and he that assaults it with bare Authority (that which is Divine alwaies excepted) may as well cut flame with his sword, or harden wax in the sun.

3. 'T IS true indeed these great Dictators do sometimes run down the company, and carry their Hypothesis without contest: but of this there may be divers reasons besides the weight of their arguments. Some unspeculative men may not have the skil to examine their assertions, and therefore an assent is their safest course; others may be lazy and not think it worth their pains; a third sort may be modest and awed by a severe brow

brow and an imperious nod : and perhaps the wiser may providently foresee the impossibility of convincing one who thinks himself not subject to error. Upon these or other like grounds 'tis very possible all may be silenced when never a one is convinced: so that these great Masters may often make very false estimates of their conquests , and *sacrifice to their own nets* , Heb. i. 16. when they have taken nothing.

4. NAY indeed this insolent way of proposing is so far from propagating their notions , that it gives prejudice against them. They are the gentle insinuations which pierce , ( as oil is the most penetrating of all liquors ; ) but in these Magisterial documents men think themselves attackt , and stand upon their guard , and reckon they must part with Honor together with their Opinion , if they suffer themselves to be Hector'd out of it. Besides , this imposing humor is so unamiable , that it gives an aversion to the Person ; and we know how forcible personal prejudices are ( tho 'tis true they should not be ) towards the biasing of Opinions. Nay indeed men of this temper do cut themselves  
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off from the opportunities of Profelyting others, by averting them from their company. Freedom is the endearing thing in Society, and where that is control'd, men are not very fond of associating themselves. 'Tis natural to us to be uneasy in the presence of those who assume an Authority over us. Children care not for the company of their Parents or Tutors, and men will care less for theirs, who would make them Children by usurping a Tutorage.

5. ALL these inconveniences are evidently consequent to this Dogmatizing, supposing men be never so much in the right: but if they happen to be in the wrong, what a ridiculous pageantry is it, to see such a Philosophical gravity set to man out a Solecism? A concluding Face put upon no concluding Argument, is the most contemptible sort of folly in the world. They do by this sound a trumpet to their own defeat: and whereas a modest mistake might slip by undiscern'd, these Rodomontade errors force themselves upon mens observation, and make it as impossible for men not to see, as it is not to despise them when they do. For indeed Pride is as  
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ill linkt with Error, as we usually say it is with Beggery, and in this as well as that, converts pity into content.

6. AND then it would be considered, what security any man that will be imposing has, that this will not be his case. Human nature is very fallible, and as it is possible a man may err in a great many things, so 'tis certain every man do's in something or other. Now who knows at the instant he is so positive, but this may be his erring turn? Alas how frequently are we mistaken even in common ordinary things! for as the Wiseman speaks, *hardly do we judg a-right even in things that are before us*, Wisd. 9. 16. our very senses do sometimes delude us. How then may we wander in things of abstruse speculation? The consideration of this hath with some so prevail'd, that it has produc'd a Sect of Scepticism: and tho I press it not for that purpose, yet sure it may reasonably be urged to introduce some modesty and calmness in our assertions. For when we have no other certainty of our being in the right, but our own persuasions that we are so: this may often be but making one error the gage for an

another. For God knows confidence is so far from a certain mark of truth, that 'tis often the seducer into falshood, none being so apt to lose their way as those who out of an ungrounded presumption of knowing it, despise all direction from others.

7. LET all this be weighed, and the result will be, that this peremtoriness is a thing that can besit no form of understanding. It renders Wise men disobliging and troublesom, and fools ridiculous and contemtible. It casts a prejudice upon the most solid reasoning, and it renders the lighter more notoriously despicable. 'Tis pity good parts should be leven'd by it, made a snare to the owners, and useles to others. And 'tis pity too that weak parts should by it be condemn'd to be alwaies so, by despising those Aids which should improve them. Since therefore 'tis so ill calculated for every Meridian, would God all Climes might be purged from it.

8. AND as there are weighty objections against it in respect of its effects, so there are no inconsiderable prejudice in relation to its causes, of which we may reckon Pride to be the most certain



and universal : for what ever else casually occurs to it , this is the fundamental constitutive principle ; nothing but a great overweening of a mans own understanding being able to instate him in that imaginary empire over other mens. For here sure we may ask the Apostles question , *Who made thee to differ from another?* When God has made Rationality the common portion of mankind , how came it to be thy inclosure ? or what Signature has he set upon thine , what mark of excellence , that thine should be paramount ? Doubtless if thou fanciest thou hast that part of *Jacobs* blessing , *To be Lord of thy brethren , and that all thy mothers sons should bow down to thee* , Gen. 27. 29. thou hast got it more surreptitiously then he did , and with less effect : for tho *Isaac* could not retract his mistaken benediction , God will never ratify that fantastick , thou hast pronounced to thy self , with his reall effective one.

9. B U T there happens many times to be another ingredient besides Pride , and that is Ignorance : for those qualities however they may seem at war , do often very closely combine. He who has nar-

row notions, that knows but a few things, and has no glimpse of any beyond him, thinks there are no such: and therefore as if he had (like *Alexander*) no want but that of worlds to conquer, he thinks himself the absolute Monarch of all knowledg. And this is of all others the most unhappy composition: for ignorance being of its self like stiff clay, an infertile soile, when Pride comes to scorch and harden it, it grows perfectly impenetrable: and accordingly we see none are so inconvincible as your half-witted people; who know just enough to excite their pride, but not so much as to cure their ignorance.

10. THERE remains yet a 2<sup>d</sup> kind of Peremptoriness which I am to speak to, and that is of those who can make no relation without an attestation of its certainty: a sort of hospitable people, who entertain all the idle vagrant reports, and send them out with passports and testimonials, who when they have once adopted a story, will have it pass for legitimate how spurious soever it originally was. These somewhat resemble those Hospitals in *Italy*, where all bastards are sure of reception, and such a provision

as may enable them to subsist in the world: and were it not for such men, many a Fatherless lie would be stifled in its birth. It is indeed strange to see, how suddenly loose rumors knit into formal stories, and from thence grow to certainties; but 'tis stranger to see that men can be of such profligated impudence, as knowingly to give them that advance. And yet 'tis no rarity to meet with such men who will pawn their honor, their souls, for that unworthy purpose: nay and that too with as much impertinence as baseness, when no interest of their own, or perhaps any mans else is to be served by it.

10. THIS is so prodigious a thing, as seems to excite ones Curiosity to inquire the cause of so wonderful an effect. And here, as in other unnatural productions, there are several concurrents. If we trace it from its original, its first Element seems to be Idleness: this diverting a man from serious useful entertainments, forces him upon (the usual refuge of vacant Persons) (the inquiring after News; which when he has got, the venting of it is his next business. If he be of a credulous Nature, and believe  
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it himself, he do's the more innocently impose it on others: yet then to secure himself from the imputation of Levity and too easy Faith, he is often tempted to lend some probable circumstance. Nay if he be of a proud humor, and have that miserable vanity of loving to speak big, and to be thought a man of greater correspondence and intelligence than his Neighbors, he will not bate an Ace of absolute certainty; but however doubtful or improbable the thing is, coming from him it must go for an indisputable truth. This seems to be the descent of this unhappy folly, which yet is often nurs'd up by a mean or imprudent Education. A man that hath convers'd only with that lower sort of company, who durst not dispute his veracity, thinks the same false Coin will pass over the world, which went currant among his Fathers Servants or Tenants: and therefore we may observe that this is most usuall in young men, who have come raw into company with good fortunes and ill breeding. But it is too true also that too many never lose that habit, but are as morosely positive in their Age, as they were childishly so in their Youth. Indeed

deed 'tis impossible they should be otherwise, unless they have the wit to disentangle themselves first from the love of Flattery, and after from the company of Flatterers: for (as I have before observ'd) no vice will ever wither under their shade. I think I shall do the Reader no ill office to let in a little light upon them, and shew him some of those many mischiefs that attend this unworthy practice.

12. FIRST, it engages a man to Oaths, and for ought he knows to Perjuries. When he has lancht out boldly into an incredible relation, he thinks he has put his Credit upon the forlorn hope, and must take care to relieve it: and there is no succor so constantly ready at hand as that of Oaths and imprecations, and therefore whole vollies of them are discharged upon the doubtful. Thus do we make God a witness, and our Souls parties in the cause of every trifling rumor, as if we had model'd our Divinity by the Scheme of that Jesuitical Casuist, who legitimates the Killing of a man for an Apple.

13. A second mischief is, that it betraies man to quarrels. He that is perem-



peremptory in his own Story, may meet with another that is as peremptory in the contradiction of it, and then the two *Sr. Positives* must have a skirmish indeed. He that has attested the truth of a false, or the certainty of a doubtful thing, has brought himself into the same strait with *Baalams* Ass, he must either fall down flat, or run upon a sword, Num. 22. 27. For if his Hearers do but express a diffidence, either he must sink to a down-right Confession that he was a Liar: or else he must huff and bluster till perhaps he raise a counter-storm, and as he fool'd himself out of his truth, so be beaten out of his pretence to it. Indeed there is scarce any quality that do's so tempt and invite affronts as this do's: for he that can descend to such a meanness, may reasonably enough be presumed to have little (as of true worth, so) even of that which the world calls Gallantry, and so every puny sword-man will think him a good tame Quarry to enter and flesh himself upon.

14. IN the third place it exposes him to all the contempt and scorn which either good or ill men can fling upon him: the good abominate the sin, the ill triumph

umph over the folly of it. The truth is there can be nothing more wretchedly mean. To be Knight of the Post to every fabulous relation, is such a fordid thing, that there can scarce be any name of reproch too vile for it. And certainly he that can pawn his faith upon such miserable terms, will by those frequent mortgages quickly be snapt upon a forfeiture; or however will have his credit so impar'd by it, that no man will think his word a competent gage for the slightest concern.

15. AND this may pass for a fourth consideration, That this Positiveness is so far from gaining credit to his present affirmation, that it destroies it for the future: for he that sees a man make no difference in the confidence of his asserting realities and fictions, can never take his mesures by any thing he avers, but according to the common Proverb, will be in danger of disbelieving him even when he speaks truth. And of this no man can want conviction, who will but consult his own observation. For what an allay do we find it to the credit of the most probable event, that it is reported by one who uses to stretch? Thus

unhappily do such men defeat their own designs: for while they aver stoutly that they may be believed, that very thing makes them doubted, the world being not now to learn how frequently Confidence is made a supplement for Truth. Nor let any man who uses this, flatter himself that he alone do's (like *Jobs* messenger) escape the common fate: for tho perhaps he meet with some who in civility or pity will not dispute the probability of his narrations, or with others who for raillery will not discourage the humor with, which they mean (in his absence) to divert themselves, yet he may rest assur'd he is discern'd by all, and derided for it.

16. IT therefore concerns men who either regard their truth, or their reputation, nor to indulge to this humor, which is the most silly way of shipwrecking both. For he that will lay those to stake upon every flying story, may as well wager his estate which way the wind will sit next morning, there being nothing less to be confided in, then the breath of fame, or the whispers of private tale-bearers. Wise men are afraid to report improbable truths: what a fool-hardiness is it

then to attest improbable falsities , as it often is the luck of these Positive men to do ?

17. C E R T A I N L Y there is nothing which they design by this , which may not be obtain'd more effectually by a modest and unconcern'd relation. He that barely relates what he has heard , and leaves the hearer to judg of the probability , do's as much ( I am sure more civilly ) entertain the company , as he that throws down his gauntlet in attestation. He as much satisfies the itch of telling news ; he as much perswades his hearers : nay very much more ( for these over earnest asseverations serve but to give men suspicion that the Speaker is conscious of his own falseness : ) and all this while he has his retreat secure , and stands not responsible for the truths of his relation. Nay indeed tho men speak never so known and certain truths , 'tis most advisablen ot to press them too importunately. For boldness , like the Bravoes and Banditti , is seldom employed but upon desperate services , and is so known a Pander for lying , that truth is but defam'd by its attendance.

18. To conclude , modesty is so amiable

ble, so insinuating a thing, that all the rules of Oratory cannot help men to a more agreeable ornament of discourse. And if they will try it in both the foregoing instances, they will undoubtedly find the effects of it: a modest proposal will soonest captivate mens reasons, and a modest relation their belief.



## S E C T. XII.

*Of Obscene Talk.*

I. **T**HERE is another vice of the Tongue which I cannot but mention, tho I knew not in which of the former Classes to place it: not that it comes under none, but that 'tis so common to all, that 'tis not easy to resolve to which peculiarly to assign it, I mean obscene and immodest talk, which is offensive to the purity of God, dammageable and infectious to the innocence of our Neighbors, and most pernicious to ourselves: and yet is now grown a thing so common, that one would think we were fallen into an Age of Metamorphosis, and that the Brutes did, not only Poetically and in fiction, but really speak. For the talk of many is so bestial, that it seems to be but the conceptions of the more libidinous Animals clothed in human Language.

2. **A**ND yet even this must pass for Ingenuity, and this vile descent below  
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Humanity, must be counted among the highest streins of Wit. A wretched debasement of that sprightful Faculty, thus to be made the interpreter to a Goat or Boar: for doubtless had those Creatures but the organs of Speech, their Fancies lie enough that way to make them as good company, as those who more studiously apply themselves to this sort of entertainment.

3. THE crime is comprehensive enough to afford abundance of matter for the most Satyrical zeal: but I consider the dissecting of putrid Bodies may cast such pestilential fumes, as all the benefits of the scrutiny will not recompence. I shall therefore in respect to the Reader dismiss this noisome Subject, and thereby give an example with what abhorrence he should alwaies reject such kind of discourse, remembering the advice of St. Paul, *That all uncleanness should not be once named among those who would walk as becometh Saints*, Eph. 5. 3.

*The*

*The Close.*

1. **I** Have now touched upon those enormities of Speech which I principally design'd to observe, wherein I have bin far from making a full and exact Catalogue : therefore I would have no man take this little Tract for a just Criterion, by which to try himself in reference to his words. Yet God grant that all that read it, may be able to approve themselves even by this imperfect essay : and he that do's so, makes fair approaches towards being *that perfect man* St. *James* speaks of, chap. 3. 1. These being such faults of the Tongue as are the harder to avoid, because they are every day exemplified to us in common practice, (nay some of them recommended as reputable and ingenious.) And it is a strange insinulative power which example and custom have upon us. We see it in every trivial secular instance, in our very habit : those dresses which we laugh at in our forefathers wardrobes or pictures, when by the circulation of time and vanity they are brought about, we think very becoming. 'Tis the same in  
our

our diet: our very palates conform to the fashion, and every thing grows amiable to our fancies, according as 'tis more or less received in the world. And upon this account all sobriety and strict vertue lies now under a heavy prejudice, and no part of it more, then this of the Tongue, which custom has now enfranchized from all the bonds Moralists or Divines had laid upon it.

2. BUT the greater the difficulties are, the more it ought to awake our diligence: if we lie loose and carelessly, 'tis odds we shall be carried away with the stream. We had need therefore fix our selves, and by a sober recollection of the ends for which our Speech was given us, and the account we must one day give of it, impress upon our selves the baseness and the danger of misemploying it. Yet a negative innocence will not serve our turns, 'twill but put us in the condition of him, *who wrapt up the talent he was commanded to employ*, Mat. 25. 25. Nay indeed 'twill be impossible to preserve even that if we aspire no farther. The Tongue is a busie active Part, will scarce be kept from motion: and therefore if that activity be not determin'd to good objects

objects, 'twill be practicing upon bad. And indeed I believe a great part of its licentiousness is owing to this very thing. There are so few good themes of discourse in use, that many are driven to the ill for want of better. Learning is thought Pedantic, Agriculture Peasant-like, and Religion the most insufferable of all: so by excluding all usefull subjects of converse, we come together as *St. Paul* (in another case) saies, *Not for the better but for the worse*, 1. Cor. II. 17. And if the Philosopher thought he had lost that day wherein he had not learnt something worthy his notice, how many daies do we worse then lose, by having them not only emty of solid useful acquisitions, but full of noxious and pernicious ones? And indeed if they be the one, they will not miss to be the other also: for the mind is like the stomach, which if it be not supplied with wholesome nourishment, will at last suck in those humors with which the body most abounds. So that if in our converse we do not interchange sober usefull notions, we shall at the best but traffique toies and baubles, and most commonly infection and poison. He therefore that would keep his  
tongue



tongue from betraying himself or others to sin; must tune it to a quite contrary Key, make it an instrument, and incentive to vertue; by which he shall not only secure the negative part of his duty, but comply with the positive also, in employing it to those uses for which it was given him.

3. IT would be too vast an undertaking to prescribe the particular subjects of such discourse, nay indeed impossible, because many of them are occasional, such as cannot aforehand be reduced to any certain account. This only in the general we may rest upon, that all speech tending to the Glory of God or the good of man, is aright directed. Which is not to be understood so restrictively, as if nothing but Divinity or the necessary concerns of human life, may lawfully be brought into discourse: something is to be indulged to common civility, more to the intimacies and endearments of friendship, and a competency to those recreative discourses which maintain the cherefulness of society; all which are, if moderately used, within the latitude of the rule, as tending (tho in a lower degree) to the well-being of men, and by consequent to the

honor of God, who indulges us those innocent refreshments. But if the subordinate uses come to encroach upon the higher, if we dwell here and look no farther, they then become very sinful by the excess, which were not so in their nature. That inordinacy sets them in opposition to Gods designation, in which they were allowed only a secondary place. We should therefore be carefull to improve all opportunities of letting our tongues pay their more immediate homage to God, in the duties of praiers and praises, making them not only the interpreters of our pious affections, but the promoters of the like in others. And indeed he can scarce be thought in earnest, who praies, *Hallowed be thy name*, and do's not as much endeavor it with men, as he solicites it from God.

4. AND if we answer our obligations in this point, we shall in it discharge the highest part of our duty to man also: for in whose heart soever we can implant a true reverential awe of God, we sow the seed of immortality, of an endless happy being, the greatest the most superlative good whereof he is capable. Besides in the interim, we do by it help to manumit and

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release him from those servile drudgeries to vice, under which those remain who live without God in the world. And these indeed are benefits worthy the dignity of human nature to communicate. And it is both sad and strange, to see among the multitude and variety of Leagues that are contracted in the world, how few there are of these pious combinations; how those who shew themselves concern'd in all the petty secular interests of their friends, never take this at all into their care; a pregnant evidence how little true friendship there is among men.

5. I know some think they sufficiently excuse themselves when they shift off this office to Divines, whose peculiar business they say it is. But this is as if one who sees a poor fainting wretch, should forbear to administer a Cordial he has at hand, for fear of intrenching on the Physicians Faculty. Many opportunities a Friend or Companion may have which a Divine may want. He often sees a man in the very fit, and so may more aptly apply: for where there is an intimacy of Converse, men lay themselves open, discover those passions, those vices, which they carefully veil when

a strange, or severer eie approches. Besides, as such a one may easier discern the disease, so he has better advantages for administring remedies: so Children will not take those Medicines from the Doctors hand, which they will from a Nurse or Mother: and we are usually too Childish in what relates to our Souls; look on good counsel from an Ecclesiastic as a Divinity Potion, and set our stomacs against it; but a Familiar may insensibly insinuate it into us, and ere we are aware beguile us into health. Yet if Lay Persons will needs give the Clergy the inclosure of this office, they should at least withdraw those impediments they have laid in their way, by depositing those prejudices which will certainly frustrate their endeavor. Men have in these later daies bin taught to look on Preaching as a thing of form to the Hearers, and of profit only to the Speakers, a *craft whereby*, as *Demetrius* saies, *They get their living*. Acts 16. 25. But admit it were so in this last respect, yet it do's not infer it should be so in the former. If it be a Trade, 'twas sure thought (as in all Ages but this) a very useful one, or else there would never have bin such incouragement

agement given to it. No state ever allotted public certain Salaries for a set of Men that were thought utterly useless: and if there be use to be made of them, shall we lose our advantages merely because they gain theirs? We are in nothing else so senseless, no man will refuse counsel from a Physician, because he lives by the Profession. 'Tis rather an argument on his side, that because such an interest of his own depends on it, he has bin the more industrious to fit himself for it. But not to run farther in this digression, I shall apply it to my purpose, by making this equitable proposal, that Lay men will not so moralize the common Fable, as neither to admonish one another themselves, nor suffer Ministers to do it without them. And truly 'tis hard if neither of these can be granted when both ought. I am sure all is little enough that can be don, tho we should have, as the Prophet speaks, *Precept upon precept, Line upon Line, here a little and there a little*, Is. 28. 13. Mans nature is so unattentive to good, that there can scarce be too many monitors. We see *Satan* tho he have a much stronger party in our inclinations, dares not rely upon it, but is still  
em-



employing his emissaries, to confirm and excite them: and if whilst he has so many Agents among us, God shall have none, we are like to give but an ill account of our zeal either to God or our neighbor, or of those tongues which were given us to glorify the one, and benefit the other. Indeed without this, our greatest officiousness in the secular concerns of others is no kindness. When we strive to advance the same, to increase the fortune of a wicked man, what do we in it, but enable him to do the more mischiefs, by his wealth to foment his own luxuries, and by his reputation commend them to the practice of others? He only makes his friend truly rich and great, who teaches him to employ those advantages aright: and would men turn their tongues to this sort of Oratory, they would indeed shew they understood for what ends they were given them.

6. BUT as all good receives enhancement from its being more diffusive, so these attempts should not be confined to some one or two intimates or relatives, but be as extensive as the common needs, or at least as our opportunities. 'Tis a generous ambition to benefit many, to oblige

lige communities: which can no way so well be don, as by endeavoring to subvert vicious customs, which are the pests and poisons of all societies. The heathens had many ceremonies of lustrations for their cities and countries, but he that could purify and refine their manners, would indeed attain to the substance of those shadows. And because the Apostle tells us, that *Evil words corrupt good manners*, 1 Cor. 15. 33. 'twould be a fundamental piece of reformation, to introduce a better sort of converse into the world: which is an instance so agreeable to my present subject, that I cannot Close more pertinently, then to commend the endeavor to the Reader; who if he have bin by this Tract at all convinced of the sin and mischief of those Schemes of discourse deciphered in it, cannot be more just to his convictions, then by attempting to supplant them.

7. IT were indeed a design worthy of a noble soul, to try to new model the Age in this particular, to make it possible for men to be at once conversable and innocent. I know 'twill be objected, 'tis too vast a project for one or many single Persons to undertake: yet difficulties use to animate generous spirits, espe-

especially when (as here) the very attempt is laudable. But as *Christ* saies of Wisdom, so may we of Courage, The Children of this world are more daring then the Children of light. The great corrupters of discourse have not bin so distrustful of themselves: for 'tis visible to any that will reflect, that 'tis within mans memory since much of this monstrous exorbitancy of discourse grew in fashion, particularly the Atheistical and Blasphemous. The first propugners of it were but few, and durst then but whisper their black rudiments: yet the world now sees what a harvest they have from their devilish industry.

8. AND shall we give over our Clime as forlorn and desperate, and conclude that nothing which is not venemous will thrive in our Soil? Would some of parts and authority but make the experiment, I cannot think that all places are yet so vitiated, but that they may meet with many, who would relish sober and ingenuous discourse, and by their example be animated to propagate it to others: but as long as Blasphemy, Ribaldry, and Detraction set up for Wit, and carry it without any competition, we do implicitly  
yield

yield that title we dispute not: and 'tis hard to say, whether their triumphs be more owing to the boldness of ill men, or the pusillanimity of the good. What if upon the trial they should meet with the worse part of *St. Paul's* fate at Athens, *That some will mock*, Acts 17. 32. yet perhaps they may partake of the better also, and find others that would be willing *to bear them again*, and some few at least *may cleave unto them*. And sure they are too tender and delicate, that will run no hazard, nor be willing to bear a little share in that profane drollery, with which an Apostle was, and their God is daily assaulted: especially when by this exposing themselves, they may hope to give some check to that impious liberty. However besides the satisfaction of their own consciences, they may also gain this advantage by the attempt, that it may be a good test by which to try their company. For those whom they find impatient of innocent and profitable converse, they may assure themselves can only ensnare not benefit them; and he is a very weak Gamester, that will be drawn to play upon such terms as make it highly probable for him to lose, but impossible for

him to win. Therefore in that case the advice of *Solomon* is very proper, *Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of Knowledg*, Prov. 14. 7.

9. BUT he that will undertake so Heroic an enterprize, must qualify himself for it, by being true to his own pretensions. He must leave no uneven thred in his loom, or by indulging to any one sort of reprobable discourse himself, defeat all his endeavors against the rest. Those aëry Speculators that have writ of the Philosophers Stone, have required many Personall qualifications, strict abstinences and purities in those who make the experiment. The thing may have this sober application, that those who would turn this Iron Age into Gold, that would convert our rusty drossy Converse into a purer strein, must be perfectly clean themselves. For alas what effect can that man hope from his most zealous reprehensions, who laies himself open to recrimination? He that hears a man bitterly inveigh against blasphemy and profaneness, and (yet in that almost the same breath) hears his monitor inveigh as bitterly against his Neighbor, will scarce think



think him a good guide of his tongue, that has but half the mastery of his own. Let every man therefore be sure to begin at the right end of his work, to wash his own mouth clean, before he prescribe Gargarisms to others. And to that purpose let him impartially reflect on all the undue liberties he has given his tongue, whether those which have bin here remarked, or those others which he may find in all Practical books, especially in (the most practical of all books) his own Conscience. And when he has trac'd his talk thro all its wild rambles, let him bring home his stray; not like the lost sheep with joy, but with tears of penitence and contrition, and keep a strict watch over it that break not loose again; nay farther require it to make some restitution for the trespass it has committed in its former excursions: to restore to God what it has rob'd of his Honor, by devoting it self an instrument of his service; to his Neighbor what it has detracted from him, by wiping off that sullage it has cast upon his Fame; and to himself by defacing those ill Characters of vanity and folly it has imprinted on him. Thus may the Tongue cure its own

sting, and by a kind of Sympathetic virtue, the wound may be healed by dressing the weapon. But alas when we have done all, the Tongue is so slippery that it will often be in danger to deceive our watch: nay it has a secret intelligence with the heart, which like a corrupted Goaler is too apt to connive at its escape. Let us therefore strengthen our guards, call in him who sees all the secret practices of our trecherous hearts, and commit both them and our tongues to his custody. Let us say with the Psalmist, *Try me, O Lord, and seek the ground of my heart*, Psa. 229. 23. And with him again, *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips, O let not my heart be inclined to any evil thing*, Psa. 141. 3. And if hands thus join in hand, Prov. 16. 5. if Gods grace be humbly invoked, and our own endeavour honestly employed, even this *unruly evil* of the Tongue (as S. James calls it) Chap. 3. 8. may be in some degree tamed. If now and then it get a little out by stealth, yet it will not like the Demoniack be so raving, as quite to break all its chains. If we cannot alwaies secure our selves from inadvertence and surprize, but that a forbidden word may somtimes escape

fcape us, yet we may from deliberate willfull offences of the Tongue. And tho we should all aspire higher, yet if we can but reach this, we ought not to excuse our selves (upon remaining infirmities) from the Christian generous undertaking, I was recommending, the reforming of others. Indeed I had made a very impertinent exhortation to that, if this degree of fitness may not be admitted; for I fear there would be none upon earth could attempt it upon other terms: the world must still remain as it is, and await only the Tongues of Angels to reduce it. Nor need we fear that censure of Hypocrisy which we find, Mat. 7. 5. for the case is very differing. 'Tis indeed as ridiculous as insolent an attempt, for one that has a Beam in his own eye, to pretend to cast a Mote out of his brothers: but it holds not on the contrary, that he that has a Mote in his own, should not endeavor to remove the Beam in his Brothers. Every speck do's not blind a man, nor do's every infirmity make one unable to discern, or incompetent to reprove the grosser faults of others.

10. YET after all let us as much as is possible clear our eies even of this mote, and make our Copy as worth transcribing as we can: for certainly the best instrument of reformation is example: and tho admonition may sometimes be necessary, yet there are many circumstances required to the right ordering of that, so that it cannot alwaies be practicable, but a good example ever is. Besides it has a secret magnetic vertue: like the Loadstone it attracts by a power of which we can give no account: so that it seems to be one of those occult qualities, those secrets in nature, which have puzzled the enquirers, only experience demonstrates it to us. I am sure it do's (too abundantly) in ill examples, and I doubt not, might do the like in good, if they were as plentifully experimented. And that they may be so, let every man be ambitious to cast in his mite: for tho two make but a farthing, yet they may be multiplied to the vastest sum. However if a man cannot reform others, yet I am sure 'twill be worth his while, so to *save himself from this untoward generation*, Act. 2. 40. I have now presented the Tongue under a  
double

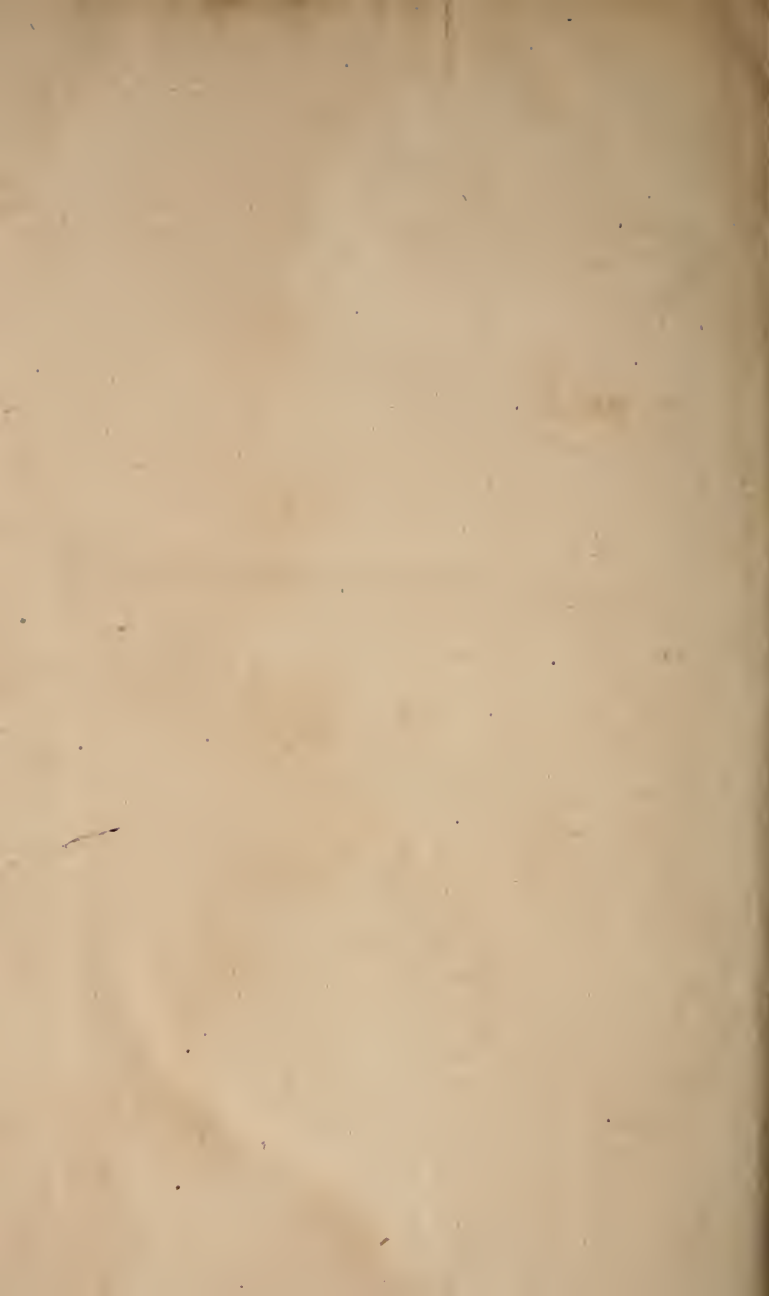
double aspect, such as may justify the ancient Definition of it, that it is the worst and best part of man, the best in its original and design, and the worst in its corruption and degeneration. In David the man after Gods heart it was his glory, Psal. 57. 8. *The best member that he had*; Psal. 108. 1. *But in the wicked it cuts like a sharp Razor*, Psal. 25. 2. *'Tis as the venom of Asps* 140. 3. The Tongues from heaven were *Cloven* Act. 2. 2. to be the more diffusive of good: but those that are *fired from hell* are forked, Jam. 3. 6. to be the more impressive of mischief: it must be referred to every mans choice, into which of the forms he will mold his. Solomon tells us *Death and Life are in the power of the Tongue*, and that not only directly in regard of the good or ill we may do to others, but reflexively also, in respect of what may rebound to ourselves. Let *Moses* then make the inference from *Solomons* premises, *Therefore chuse life*, Deut. 30. 15. a proposal so reasonable, so agreeable to nature, that no flourish can render it more inviting. I shall therefore leave it to the Readers contemplation, and shall hope that if he please but to  
revolve

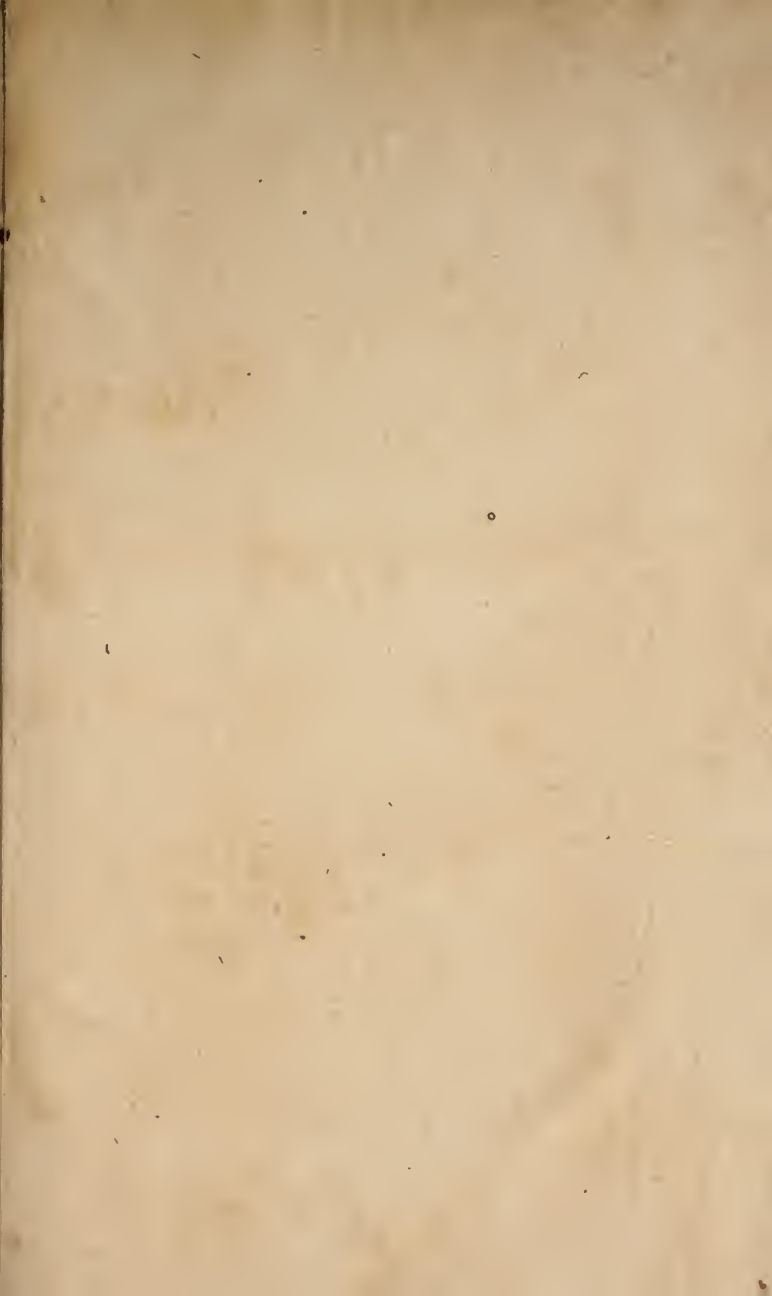


revolve it with that seriousness which the importance exacts, he will new set his tongue, compose it to those pious Divine strains, which may be a proper prelude to those Allelujahs he hopes eternally to sing.

FINIS.











8:1:2

